REMARKS

ON

THE REV. ROWLAND HILL'S

JOURNAL, &c.

IN A LETTER TO THE AUTHOR:

INCLUDING

REFLECTIONS ON ITINERANT AND LAY PREACHING.

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REMARKS, &c.

REV. SIR,

IN the Preface to your Journal, you requeſt the candid reader to remember, "That no ill deſign could have "influenced you in the free remarks made on different "parties; your only aim being to unite thoſe who are "ſeparated*." I give you credit for your ſincerity. But *you* ſhould have *remembered* that remarks may be made with ſuch *freedom* as to defeat their deſign. If ſtrong words or harſh epithets be employed, they tend rather to widen a breach, than to *unite*. Still more is this the caſe, if theſe be accompanied by miſrepreſentation. I have no idea that you are *wilfully* chargeable with any thing of this kind. Your character, with every impartial perſon, muſt ſet aſide ſuch a ſuppoſition. But he who undertakes to inform the public, ought himſelf to be well informed. An author, who gives an unfair repreſentation of principles or facts, although he do it without deſign, is notwithſtanding juſtly liable to cenſure; if he has not uſed all the means in his power to obtain proper information. This, I am ſatisfied, you have not done with reſpect to the Seceſſion Church. Had you been giving an account of a ſociety that exiſted ſome centuries ago, of which only ſome indiſtinct memorials were preſerved, you would have been far more excuſable. But you had abundance of authentic documents within your reach, had you been diſpoſed to procure or to conſult them.

You indeed ſay, "Having written at a diſtance from

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" the ſeat of immediate information, if in any reſpect I " have been incorrect, it was with no *intentional deſign* to " miſrepreſent any party whatever, by illiberal, unjuſt, " or unfair remarks *." But if you give a man a ſevere blow, it is rather late to ſay to him, after he has received it; " Sir, I hope you will excuſe me, I did not at all " mean to hurt you." Many in England, many of your own connections, will read *your* work, who may never have the opportunity, or who may not have the inclination to read what is written in reply. You have done every thing in your power to fix the ſtigma of *bigotry* on all who differ from you, as to your notions of communion: and this may go a great way to prepoſſeſs weak minds, even againſt the evidence of truth.

" I am glad," you ſubjoin, " I have lately received in- " formation to begin with an apology for what will be " found in the body of the pamphlet." Speaking of ſome expreſſions in the Solemn League and Covenant; you ſay, " I am informed many of the Burgher Seceders " entirely diſown thoſe offenſive and obnoxious clauſes, " and abide by the Covenant only as it relates to their " own Church diſcipline, and the excellent truths con- " tained in the Confeſſion of Faith of the Church of Scot- " land." This apology, Sir, is very candid, and worthy of an honeſt man. But is it not extremely aukward for an author to be under the neceſſity of *apologizing* in his preface, for what is " found in the body" of his book? Does not the neceſſity of ſuch an apology plainly ſhew that he has not written with ſufficient deliberation? Is ſuch an apology ſufficient, when you had the work ſtill in your power? Becauſe it might perhaps be *printed*, was it neceſſary that it ſhould be *publiſhed*; or was there no way of mending matters, but by ſending it forth with a prefatory contradiction?

If you received this information, as would ſeem unexpectedly,

* Preface, page xi.

pectedly, as to thoſe called Burgher Seceders, was it not natural for you to ſuſpect that you might alſo be miſinformed as to the other body of Seceders? And was it not juſt as eaſy to procure authentic intelligence with reſpect to the one as the other? Your "diſtance from the "ſeat of immediate information" was not a ſufficient reaſon for hazarding any thing that might eventually appear incorrect. There are "reſpectable characters from Scot-"land reſident" in London, who could have given you the moſt full and authentic information.

The candour you profeſs, and indeed diſcover in various inſtances, gives ground to hope, that, if ever you reprint your Journal and Remarks, you will correct your miſtakes "in the body of the Pamphlet." This is a reparation, which no man who writes for the intereſts of truth, can conſiſtently refuſe.

You ſeem greatly to forget yourſelf, when you attempt to give an account of the Solemn League and Covenant. Having quoted that clauſe in which covenanters engaged to endeavour the preſervation of the Reformed Religion in the Church of Scotland againſt their *common enemies*, you exclaim; "What a dreadful ſpirit, when people *pre-*"*ciſely of the ſame faith*, and *only* differing about mere "forms of government, ſhould treat each other as com-"mon enemies*!" But were the men, here called "com-"mon enemies," conſidered merely as Epiſcopalians; or, as you expreſs it, as "only differing about mere forms "of government?" Had you turned your eye to the hiſtory of that period, you would inſtantly have ſeen the contrary. You would have ſeen that they were the enemies of their liberties, both civil and religious. Had you only attended to the preceding paragraph, containing the Introduction to the Solemn League, you muſt have ſeen who they were. For the Covenanters enter

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into theſe engagements, "calling to mind the treacher-
"ous and bloody plots, conſpiracies, attempts, and prac-
"tices of the enemies of God againſt the true religion,
"and profeſſors thereof in all places, eſpecially in theſe
"three kingdoms, ever ſince the Reformation of Reli-
"gion; and how much their rage, power, and preſump-
"tion are of late, and at this time increaſed and exer-
"ciſed, whereof the deplorable ſtate of the church and
"kingdom of Ireland, the diſtreſſed ſtate of the church
"and kingdom of England, and the dangerous ſtate of
"the church and kingdom of Scotland, are preſent and
"public teſtimonies." They "called to mind," that for a long time the Papiſts had employed the high-flying Epiſcopalians as tools for overthrowing the Reformation; that even in the reign of James I. the new biſhops had admitted that the church of Rome was a true church, and the Pope the firſt biſhop of Chriſtendom; that they had declared for the lawfulneſs of images in churches, for the real preſence, and that the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation was a ſcholaſtic nicety; that they had pleaded for confeſſion to a prieſt, for ſacerdotal abſolution, and the proper merit of good works *. They "called to mind" the many plots of the Papiſts, in the reign of Charles I. to re-eſtabliſh Popery by ſimilar methods, and eſpecially by the inſtrumentality of Laud. They could not have forgotten the Iriſh maſſacre, which had taken place only about two years before they framed the covenant; which horrid maſſacre, it was generally believed, was perpetrated not without the knowledge of ſome of the principal perſons about the court.

But I aſk no other teſtimony than your own. Had you only looked back to page 74. of your "Obſerva-
"tions and Remarks," you muſt have recollected the character of theſe called *common enemies*. Speaking of Charles I. you ſay, "It was in his reign that the laws
"in

* Neal's hiſt. Pur. vol. II. p. 127.

" in favour of Epiſcopacy were to be enforced againſt the " judgment and conſciences of the people. The liturgy " ſent down by Archbiſhop Laud was attempted to be " enforced." And is not this the man, who, according to his own confeſſion, " daily called upon his Majeſty " for his [warlike] preparations" againſt the Scots, on account of what had been done by the General Aſſembly of the church at Glaſgow, 1638 *?

You have alſo ſaid, that theſe common enemies were " people preciſely of the ſame faith." Here again you run too faſt. Were Laud and his party " preciſely of " the ſame faith" with the covenanters? Did not he do all in his power to eſtabliſh the Arminian errors, and many of thoſe maintained by the church of Rome? Is it not well known, that the Jeſuits boaſted that they expected the deſtruction of the Proteſtant cauſe in Britain, from the influence of Arminianiſm, under the tutelage of Laud?

You quote that paſſage, " We ſhall endeavour to bring " the churches of God, in the three kingdoms, to the " neareſt conjunction and uniformity in religion, &c. " that we, and our poſterity after us, may, as brethren, " live in faith and love, and that the Lord may delight " to dwell in the midſt of us." You give your paraphraſe in the following words; " That is, we make a " ſolemn decree, that our great great grand-children ſhall " preciſely think as we think, and be religious in no one's " way but ours. And we deſign by this, our holy law, " that the Lord God himſelf may be *bound to dwell with* " *us, and our poſterity after us*, to the ninth, nineteenth, " or ninety-ninth generation, as you are pleaſed to take " it †." This language, Sir, give me leave to ſay, is unworthy of your character. It has a lightneſs, a wantonneſs, little ſuited to a ſerious ſubject. It bears too much reſemblance to the profane humour of the preſent evil world.

* Ruſhworth ap. Neal, vol. II. p. 265. † Page 85.

world. Had it been an enemy who had thus reproached, an enemy of the ways of God, it would have excited no ſurpriſe; but it comes with an ill grace from one who has already declared, that "the purity, integrity, and "devotedneſs of heart of theſe original covenanters, may "moſt readily be admitted;" and that "they were a "people that ſurely meant to be devoted to his [God's] "glory *."

But indeed, in giving your gloſs, you evidently miſtake the meaning of your text. The paſſage quoted, by no means conveys the idea of any ſuch *decree* as that you mention; nor does it contain any "promiſe for "others," ſimilar to that "made by god-fathers and god-"mothers in the Engliſh Church." The framers of this engagement ſimply expreſs the *deſign* of their endeavours to bring the churches of God to the neareſt conjunction. This is, "that we, and our poſterity after us, may, as "brethren, live in faith and love." They conſidered this as a mean for promoting unity and brotherly affection; and they were not ſo ſelfiſh as to wiſh to engroſs the benefit entirely to themſelves. It was their earneſt deſire that ſucceeding generations might reap the happy fruits of it. And muſt they be condemned for uſing endeavours, that others, as well as themſelves, might, "as "brethren, live in faith and love," in as far as theſe endeavours correſponded to the limitation expreſſed in the preceding ſentence, *according to the word of God?* No farther, indeed, could their endeavours conduce to the exerciſe either of faith or of love. Seceders never acknowledged any right, on the part of parents, to *promiſe* for their children, either for thoſe "who now are," or "for the children who are ſtill unborn †." They only aſſert what has been admitted by all civilized nations, and what cannot be denied, but at the expence of all order, even in civil ſociety, that the engagements of anceſtors,

* Page 83. note. † See page 123.

anceſtors, *if in themſelves lawful*, and ſuch as reſpect poſterity, are binding on them. It is evident that the lawful vows of a church neceſſarily include all her members in ſucceſſion, becauſe a church is a permanent ſociety; and that they extend to the poſterity of church-members, in the cloſeſt connection with God's promiſe, and on the ſame ground. For the promiſe of grace neceſſarily implies an obligation to duty. To deny that poſterity lie under this obligation, is, in effect, to exclude them from any intereſt in the promiſe, in which God graciouſly teſtifies that he will be "a God to us, and to our ſeed." Now, always when he promiſes to be a God to any, he requires that they ſhould in conſequence be "to him a people."

Can you coolly ſuppoſe, that the covenanters "deſigned, "by this, *their holy law*, that the Lord God himſelf, "ſhould be *bound* to dwell with them and their poſteri-"ty?" Do you really believe that perſons of ſuch "pu-"rity, integrity, and devotedneſs of heart,—that ſurely "meant to be devoted to his glory," could mean, at the ſame time, to give law to "the Lord God himſelf?" Is it conſiſtent with the candour you profeſs, to impoſe ſuch a ſenſe on their words; or will they juſtly bear it? However much language of this ſort may be uſed as an handle for unhallowed raillery, by thoſe who laugh at every thing ſacred, it had a claim upon you, Sir, for greater tenderneſs. Every cool and impartial reader muſt ſee, at a ſingle glance, that this is mentioned only as an *end* that they had in view, in endeavouring to bring the churches of God, in the three kingdoms, to the neareſt conjunction in the truth; an end, to which they conſidered a ſcriptural uniformity as eminently ſubſervient; and that they repreſent this unity merely as a *mean* connected with ſo deſirable an end, according to the uſual tenor of the divine conduct with churches and nations. The church of Iſrael expreſſes a ſimilar idea, when ſhe ſays, "Surely his ſalvation is nigh them that fear him,

"that

"that glory may dwell in our land *;" and if men, as brethren, live in faith and love, ſalvation is not far off. They had neither *purity*, nor *devotedneſs of heart*, if they ſuppoſed, that "the Lord God himſelf could be "bound" to beſtow or continue his grace, on the ground of their duty.

You next conſider the clauſe which reſpects extirpation;—"That we ſhall, in like manner, without reſpect "of perſons, endeavour the extirpation of Popery, Pre-"lacy, that is, church-government by Arch-biſhops, "Biſhops, their Chancellors and Commiſſaries, &c." Now, Sir, while I conſider it as my duty to vindicate the Covenanters, in as far as they are unjuſtly accuſed, I would reckon it baſe and unchriſtian to prefer their character to that of divine and immutable truth: "For "we can do nothing againſt the truth, but for the truth." It appears to me, that different claſſes of men have gone to oppoſite extremes in explaining this clauſe. Some, ſincerely attached to the reformation in general, carried on in that period, and at the ſame time, friends to liberty of conſcience, have been ſo far blinded by their love to the cauſe, and by their admiration of the inſtruments whom God was pleaſed to employ, as not to perceive that they meant to promote reformation by any means inconſiſtent with that liberty. Hence they have urged, that the word *extirpation*, as uſed by our pious anceſtors, implied nothing of this nature. Others, going to another extreme, have contended that it did, and could imply *nothing elſe*; that they bound themſelves to extirpate hereſy in the very ſame manner in which the Papiſts had done before them.

It would ſeem, however, that they uſed this as a general word, including all thoſe different means which they accounted warrantable. Although ſuch a covenant had never been framed, I am convinced that it is my duty to endeavour

* Pſalm lxxxv. 9.

endeavour the extirpation of Popery, Prelacy, &c.; becauſe all the things mentioned are contrary to the word of God. But by what means? By thoſe only of a ſpiritual kind; for theſe alone are competent to my ſtation. Were this of a civil nature, and were I called to give my vote for the preſervation or reduction of Popery, or any corrupt ſyſtem, formerly eſtabliſhed by law, I would certainly conſider it as my duty to vote for the abrogation of theſe acts by which it was eſtabliſhed. But, according to my views, I could go no farther; and, from a hint you throw out, as to voting for the "reduction of the Epiſco-"pacy of the Engliſh church," I apprehend you "might "be diſpoſed" to go as far yourſelf *. He might conſcientiouſly give ſuch a vote, who might have no freedom in his mind to contribute to the legal eſtabliſhment of any other religious ſyſtem, although he conſidered it as ſcriptural. For there is a very great difference between withdrawing legal ſupport from a falſe or corrupt ſyſtem of religion, and poſitively giving it to one of any deſcription.

But to me it is evident, that they included ſomething more in the idea of *extirpation*. I am far from ſuppoſing that they meant, in the Popiſh ſenſe, to exterminate heretics. But it cannot juſtly be doubted, that they were determined to deny, to all who differed in their profeſſion, the free exerciſe of religion. If this be not ſufficiently clear from the general ſenſe affixed to the word itſelf, as implying the idea of force, and as applicable to the ſwearers, not merely as church-members, but in their various civil characters; it can eaſily be proved from other acts and deeds connected with the Solemn League, or framed in ſubſerviency to it. Now, if it be held that one man, in what ſtation ſoever, has a right to reſtrain another from the free exerciſe of his religion, in as far as this does not directly oppoſe the ſafety of the ſtate; the *principle* of per-

 ſecution

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* Page 108.

ſecution is admitted. For the proper and fair queſtion is not as to degrees of violence, but as to the power itſelf. He, who has a right to deny me the liberty of meeting with others to worſhip God, according to my conſcience, has an equal right to fine or to impriſon me for diſobedience to his will. In fact, if the principle be at all admitted, no bounds can be preſcribed to it,—on this ſide the gibbet or the ſtake.

Theſe worthy men, I am perſuaded, did not perceive the full extent of their principles. The Proteſtant churches had not yet, in this reſpect, been completely delivered from that Antichriſtian darkneſs which had ſo long overſpread the nations. But while their partial blindneſs and human imperfections ſhould be honeſtly confeſſed; it is ground of thankſgiving to God, that they were not permitted practically to carry their principle the ſame length it had been carried by others. In one paſſage you diſcover great candour towards them, and exhibit their conduct in that very light in which it muſt appear to one who has fairly conſidered their circumſtances. "Much allowance," you ſay, "muſt be made for the times in which this cove-
"nant was framed. The Preſbyterians had been moſt vehe-
"mently perſecuted both by Papiſts and Epiſcopalians;
"and, by way of ſelf-defence, it ſeemed almoſt neceſſary
"to arm againſt the common enemy. No wonder, there-
"fore, they were fearful to leave a power ſtanding, whoſe
"vengeance they had ſo ſeverely felt. While, therefore,
"they did wrong in denying liberty of conſcience to the
"King, and his Epiſcopal, or even Independent ſubjects,
"they were driven to it by the perſecuting ſpirit of the
"times; and liberty of conſcience was a doctrine very
"little known in theſe unhappy days *."

You and I, Sir, are perfectly agreed as to the important principle of *liberty of conſcience*. But I cannot therefore diſclaim the obligation of this covenant. I know of no obligation,

* Page 83.

obligation, but what ariſes from the divine law. Nothing can be added to its authority; ſo as to make that duty which it prohibits, or to make any thing more obligatory than the law itſelf makes it. But the law may view one perſon as ſimply under the authority of its precept; and another as not only under its precept, but as having ſolemnly recognized its authority, in ſome particular inſtance, by a vow or oath. The latter, ſurely by ſuch vow or oath, comes under a tie to obedience unknown to the former; becauſe the law does not merely require obedience to the particular precept, but enjoins us to pay our vows. Now, if that church to which I belong lies under ſolemn vows, theſe, as far as the matter of them is lawful, doubtleſs extend to every one within her pale, whether they have themſelves formally entered into theſe vows or not; for the reaſon formerly given, that a church, like a nation, is a permanent body: Of conſequence, the guilt of her members is greatly aggravated above that of others, if they forſake the truths or ways of the Lord.

In as far, then, as the Solemn League reſpects perſonal reformation, or public reformation, according to the ſpiritual nature of the kingdom of Chriſt, it muſt be viewed as obligatory on the church in theſe lands. But in as far as the original covenanters included the idea of coercion, I abjure it from the heart as much as you do. It is not, it cannot be obligatory.—For no human deed can bind in oppoſition to the ſupreme law. Now, "the weapons of "our warfare are not carnal, but ſpiritual." "They "who take the ſword, ſhall periſh with the ſword." Had I any reaſon to believe, that the principles of the Seceſſion church laid me under a neceſſity of favouring perſecution in any degree, I would eſteem it a ſufficient reaſon for renouncing all connection with her; I would reckon myſelf bound in conſcience to do it without delay. You, Sir, yourſelf make a neceſſary diſtinction between the "origin-"al main deſign" of the covenant and that ſpirit which

" intermixed itſelf" with it. You ſay, "I heartily wiſh " our Scots Seceding brethren ſucceſs in the *original main* " *deſign* of their oath *." By this, you ſeem to intend their " ſolemnly avouching themſelves to be the Lord's †;" or, as you afterwards expreſs it, " the ſolemn work of " dedication to God." We may, therefore, acknowledge it as obligatory as to its *main deſign*; while, with deteſtation, we reject the idea of what you call " the ſhocking " work of extirpating others ‡."

You ſeem, however, to carry the matter too far, in excluſively connecting the words *ſuppreſs* and *overcome* with *extirpation*. Speaking of a "poor delinquent," you ſay; " The law of *extirpation*, till he is *ſuppreſſed* and *overcome*, " hangs over his head §." You give the quotation, as if it wholly reſpected matters of *religion*. It is ground of regret, that our worthy anceſtors too much mingled civil and ſacred things. Their attention was called to both. Their exertions for both were neceſſary. But it had certainly been far better had they framed diſtinct leagues, confined to theſe different objects. As their league ſtands, however, we muſt beware of charging them unjuſtly. The word *extirpation* has no immediate connection with the other two. The firſt occurs in the *ſecond* paragraph. It is in the *ſixth* we read of *ſuppreſſing* or *overcoming*. Any one who impartially reads this, muſt ſee that they ſpeak, according to the nature of their engagement, of their enemies both as to *church* and *ſtate*. You have, indeed, kept out the beginning of the paragraph, which is a key to the whole, as you begin with the words *aſſiſt* and *defend*. It ſtands thus in the Covenant itſelf; " We ſhall " alſo, according to our *places* and *callings*, in this *common* " cauſe of Religion, *Liberty, and Peace of the Kingdoms*, " aſſiſt and defend," &c. When they afterwards ſay, " What we are not able ourſelves to ſuppreſs or over- " come, we ſhall reveal and make known, that it may be " timely

* Page 85. † P. 83. ‡ P. 85. § P. 87.

" timely prevented or removed,"—they ſeem eſpecially to refer to civil matters, particularly to ſuch " treacher-" ous and bloody plots, conſpiracies," &c. as are mentioned in the introduction.

Now, my dear Sir, for a little breathing here; as you, at this ſtation, claim ſome relief to the mind, wearied with " a tedious detail of the ſects and parties that diſfi-" gure the Chriſtian church." Let us take a peep into your *toadery*. You certainly go a ſtep farther than even theſe good men, if you call it *ſuperſtition* to be " alarmed " at the ghaſtly appearance of the innocent toad." It may be a piece of weakneſs; but you muſt ſtrain hard to claſs it under *ſuperſtition*. By ſome you may yourſelf be ſuſpected of a tincture of ſuperſtition, when you aſſert, that " *every* creature that God has ſent, we ſhould protect." For, in this caſe, it would be as reaſonable to make a *ſnakery*, or a *locuſtery*, or even a place of retirement for *bugs**, as a *toadery*. On this principle too, I am at a loſs to ſee why *toads* ſhould be ſingled out as an example. For by ſaving one of them, you are, according to your own teſtimony, an acceſſary to the *deſtruction* of *innumerable* other " creatures that God has ſent." Or do you uſe the term myſtically? They did fear *toads* in thoſe days. But they were not *innocent*. They were loaded with venom from the filthy puddles of Rome. *Reptiles* they were, but by no means *uſeful;* for all that they did was to " deſtroy in-" numerable inſects†," as they conſidered them, although far more uſeful than themſelves. At ſuch toads you would yourſelf have been " terribly alarmed." The freedom of your remarks would certainly have procured you a place in their *dungeon*. For they kept this for inſects that troubled them with their buzzing; while, like thoſe of Egypt, they themſelves crept into " the *chambers* of " kings."

I now proceed to conſider the account you give of the *Seceſſion*

* See page 86, 87. † Page 91.

Seceſſion. " They profeſſed," you ſay, " as they ſtill conti-
" nue to profeſs, an *unlimited* adherence to *every* article in
" the Confeſſion of Faith and Catechiſms *." Here you are miſinformed as to facts. Even at firſt, the Confeſſion of Faith was received in the Seceſſion, with thoſe *limitations* with which it had been received by the Church of Scotland 1647, particularly as to the power of the civil magiſtrate in eccleſiaſtical concerns. It was declared, that he ought not to call Synods, or nominate their members, in churches already " conſtituted and ſettled." To ſome, in the more early period of the Seceſſion, this limitation did not ſeem to extend far enough. Accordingly the Synod expreſs their ſentiments more fully on this head, in their anſwers to Reaſons of Diſſent given in by Mr Nairne, one of their number, who was at length depoſed and excommunicated, becauſe he perſiſted in denying the lawfulneſs of the preſent civil government. This proceſs was carried on between the years 1743 and 1750.

In conſequence of the difficulties expreſſed by many, ſomething ſtill more expreſs was found neceſſary. An Overture from the Provincial Synod of Glaſgow, on this ſubject, having been preſented to the General Synod, and been under their conſideration at different meetings, the following act was agreed to at Edinburgh, May 3. 1796. and publiſhed to the world.

THE Synod, finding they cannot at preſent enter on a particular conſideration of the Overture reſpecting the Power of the Civil Magiſtrate in Matters of Religion; but convinced of the urgent neceſſity of doing ſomething in the mean time, to obviate the ſcruples which young men at licenſe, preachers and elders at ordination, private perſons at their acceſſion and baptiſm of their children, have offered to the Courts about the doctrine taught, (or manner

* Page 94.

manner of expreſſion uſed), on that ſubject in the Confeſſion of Faith, Chap. xxiii. ſect. 3. and Chap. xx. ſect. 4.:

DECLARE, That as the Confeſſion of Faith was at firſt received by the Church of Scotland with ſome exception as to the Power of the Civil Magiſtrate relative to Spiritual Matters, ſo the Synod, for the ſatisfaction of all who deſire to know their mind on this ſubject, extend that exception to every thing in the Confeſſion which, taken by itſelf, ſeems to allow the puniſhment of good and peaceable ſubjects on account of their religious opinions and obſervances: That they approve of no other means of bringing men into the Church, or retaining them in it, than ſuch as are Spiritual, and were uſed by the Apoſtles and other Miniſters of the word in the firſt ages of the Chriſtian Church; perſuaſion, not force; the power of the Goſpel, not the ſword of the civil magiſtrate; agreeably to that moſt certain and important doctrine laid down in the Confeſſion itſelf, Chap. xx. ſect. 2. "GOD "alone is the Lord of the Conſcience, and has left it free "from the doctrines and commandments of men which "are in any thing contrary to his word, or beſide it, in "matters of faith or worſhip; ſo that to believe ſuch doc-"trine, or obey ſuch commands, out of conſcience, is to "betray true liberty of conſcience, and reaſon alſo."

Nor do the Synod mean the ſmalleſt reflection on the venerable compilers of the Confeſſion, whoſe degrees of light on theſe matters, and peculiar circumſtances, ſeem to have led them to uſe ſome expreſſions, that have been underſtood by many, and may be conſtrued, as inveſting Civil Rulers with a lordſhip over the conſciences of men, and inconſiſtent with the ſpirituality, freedom, and independence, of the kingdom of CHRIST. And the Synod hereby renew their adherence to the doctrine on this point, taught in the declaration and defence of the Aſſociate Preſbytery's Principles, concerning the preſent Civil Government, under the fourth argument from Rom. xiii. 1,—7. in theſe words: "The public good of outward and common order in

"all

" all reaſonable ſociety, unto the glory of GOD, is the great " and only end which thoſe inveſted with magiſtracy can " propoſe, in a ſole reſpect unto that office; and as in " proſecuting this end civilly, according to their office, it " is only over men's good and evil works that they can " have any inſpection, ſo it is only over theſe which they " muſt needs take cognizance for the ſaid public good; " while, at the ſame time, their doing ſo muſt be in ſuch " a manner, and proceed ſo far allenarly, as it is requiſite " for that end, without aſſuming any lordſhip immediately " over men's conſciences, or making any encroachment " upon the ſpecial privileges and buſineſs of the Church; " and, moreover, as the whole inſtitution and end of " their office are cut out by, and lie within the compaſs of, " natural principles, it were abſurd to ſuppoſe, that there " could, or ought to be any exerciſe thereof towards its " end, in the foreſaid circumſtances, but what can be " argued for and defended from natural principles."

And the Synod hereby agree, That, in the ſecond queſtion of the Formula, after the words, *as the ſaid Confeſſion was received and approved by an Act of Aſſembly* 1647, *ſeſſion* 23. there ſhall be added, *and according to the Declaration of the General Aſſociate Synod* 1796.

Extracted by

JAMES MORISON, Syn. Clk.

You muſt now ſee, Sir, that you have written on this ſubject without ſufficient information. This further appears, from the ſentence which immediately follows that already conſidered: " They ſolemnly ſwear and adopt the " flaming decree of the Solemn League and Covenant, to *ex-* " *tirpate, ſuppreſs, and overcome Prelacy, Hereſy, Schiſm,* " &c. without the leaſt degree of civil power to accom- " pliſh the ſame; that is, they ſwear to accompliſh abſo- " lute impoſſibilities, till they can get King, Lords, Com- " mons, Biſhops, and General Aſſembly to reſign the ci- " vil ſword into their hands, that they may *correct us ac-*

" *cording*

" *cording to the merciful decree* of the above ſolemn league " and covenant *." Here, Sir, you exhibit a complicated accuſation. You file a bill which has various counts in it. You charge a religious body with the profanation of a ſolemn oath; with ſwearing, when it is impoſſible they can do it " in truth, in judgment, and in righteouſneſs." This is a ſerious charge indeed! But this is not all, you charge us, as engaged in the ſolemnity of an oath, with a bloody, a perſecuting deſign, which we deteſt and diſclaim as much as you can do. This charge is ſtill more explicitly exhibited in another place. Speaking of Seceders, you ſay, " Ac- " cording to them, England, Scotland, and Ireland are " bound, or to be bound, as far as they can bind them, to " *extirpate, ſuppreſs, and overcome*, (the grand ſtinging " words of the covenant) all religions but their own, *by the* " *ſame civil ſword* which their anceſtors once wore †." It is a neceſſary caution of the wiſe man; " Go not forth " *haſtily* to ſtrive, leſt thou know not what to do in the end " thereof, when thy neighbour hath put thee to ſhame." I am fully convinced, that although it were conceivable that " King, Lords, Commons," &c. were to offer to " reſign the " civil ſword into the hands" of the General Aſſociate Synod, they would refuſe to have any thing to do with it; that although they would *not* " give communion to an Epiſ- " copal miniſter," becauſe he continued to adhere to the ſuperſtitious uſages of the Engliſh Church, he, as to his perſon and miniſtry, would be juſt as ſafe as he is at this moment.

But I muſt further inform you, that theſe different charges reſt on another that is entirely unfounded. Seceders never, to this day, ſwore the " Solemn League and Cove- " nant." They at firſt framed a *bond* adapted to their circumſtances. In this, they entirely abſtract from *civil* matters. It can only be viewed as an eccleſiaſtical bond, in which church-members ſocially dedicate themſelves to the Lord. The only clauſe which may be liable to perverſion as to its meaning, is this: " By all means which are lawful

* Page 93. † Page 123.

" and warrantable for us, *according to the word of God*, the " approven and received ſtandards of this church, and our " known principles, we ſhall, in our ſeveral ſtations and " callings, endeavour the reformation of religion in England " and Ireland, in doctrine, worſhip, diſcipline, and govern- " ment, *according to the word of God;* and to promote and " advance our covenanted conjunction and uniformity in re- " ligion, Confeſſion of Faith, and Catechiſms, Form of " Church-Government, and Directory for Worſhip, as theſe " were received by this Church." Should any one ſay, that this reſtriction, *according to the word of God*, is weakened by what follows, *the approven and received ſtandards of this church*, and that ſome of theſe give countenance to perſecuting principles; it is certainly a ſufficient reply, that theſe ſubordinate ſtandards are acknowledged as of force with us, only as they are " received by this church." And with what limitations they are received on this very head, has been ſeen already. Any man who would notwithſtanding charge the Seceſſion Church with perſecuting principles, muſt conſider its members as perſons totally deſtitute of good faith, and loſt to every moral principle.

Here I ſhall only add, that the bond referred to forms one ground on which Mr Nairne, formerly mentioned, ſtated a ſeparation from what was then the Aſſociate Preſbytery. He objected, that " a ſwearing to endeavour the *extirpation* " of Popery and Prelacy, is altogether omitted in *this pre-* " *ſent oath or covenant.*" To this it is replied in the Anſwers judicially publiſhed by the Preſbytery, and ſtill part of the avowed principles of Seceders: " As for the " Preſbytery's not uſing there the word *extirpation*, it is well " enough known that that word has been, of late years, a- " buſed to a ſanguinary ſenſe, for propagating religion by " offenſive arms, quite contrary to the mind of our reform- " ers *." Now, it does not affect our argument, whether the generality of readers ſhould agree with the Preſbytery or not, as to what is called an *abuſe* of the word, or as to their aſſertion, that this was " quite contrary to the mind of " our

* Anſwers to Mr Nairne, Head I.

" our reformers." Two things are plain from this paſſage; firſt, that when the Seceding Miniſters engaged in covenanting (which was about the time of their conteſt with Mr Nairne) in acknowledging the obligation of the Solemn League, they had no idea that it bound them, as indeed it could not, to propagate religion by violent meaſures. And, ſecondly, that in framing their bond, they had no eye to any ſuch unhallowed means of reformation, nor wiſh to employ them; nay, that they avoided the word *extirpation*, for this very reaſon, that it had been underſtood in " a ſanguinary ſenſe."

But you are ſo ſtartled at the ſuppoſed *ſanguinary* principles of Seceders, that you afterwards return to this topic. When you are paying your reſpects to the Pope, you muſt give them a compliment by the way. " Who," you inquire, " would believe that Popery and Preſbyterianiſm among " ſome Seceders are ſo near a-kin? Their engagement to " *extirpate, ſuppreſs, and overcome*, ſound ſo very like the " decretals of Pope Innocent on the other ſide of the " queſtion, that one would almoſt think his Holineſs, by an " inviſible agency, had a hand in framing the Covenant. " But no one fears them; Government wiſely protects them; " ſince only from the prejudices of education, they take up " the old faſhioned language of an ill-natured day, while " they know not what they ſay, nor whereof they affirm *." Here, Sir, we have firſt a crimination, and then an apology of a very ſtrange kind. Seceders have the ſpirit of Popery as to perſecution: but what prevents them from being dangerous? They reſemble Papiſts in another reſpect. With them, ignorance is the mother of devotion. They are merely under " the prejudices of education." Government *wiſely* protects us; not becauſe our principles are ſafe, for they are " near a-kin" to thoſe of Popery; but becauſe we are ſuch fools as not to know the meaning of language. How this agrees with what you have already ſaid, as to our inclination to *correct* others " according to the merciful decree " of the Solemn League," it is your buſineſs to ſhow, not mine.

But why ſhould ſuch heavy charges be almoſt excluſive-

* Page 108.

ly exhibited againſt Seceders? Why have you not included the Church of Scotland, and other bodies of Preſbyterians? You have quoted the oath taken by miniſters of the Church of Scotland, in which the ſwearer ſays, "I do ſincerely own "and believe the *whole* doctrine contained in the Confeſſion "of Faith *," &c. In this Confeſſion, it is affirmed, that they who publiſh "ſuch opinions, or maintain ſuch prac-"tices as are contrary to the known principles of Chriſti-"anity, whether concerning faith, worſhip, or converſation, "or to the power of godlineſs; or ſuch erroneous opinions, "or practices, as either in their own nature, or in the man-"ner of publiſhing or maintaining them, are deſtructive to "the external peace and order which Chriſt hath eſtabliſhed "in the church; may lawfully be called to account, and "proceeded againſt—by the power of the civil magiſtrate," chap. xx. ſect. 4. It is alſo declared, that the civil magiſtrate "hath authority," and that "it is his duty to take "order, that unity and peace be preſerved in the church, "that the truth of God be kept pure and entire, that all blaſ-"phemies and *hereſies* be *ſuppreſſed*," &c. chap. xxiii. ſect. 3. Is not this the very ſpirit of which you complain? Here is your old friend *ſuppreſs*. Does it bear a better ſenſe here, than you aſcribe to it in the Solemn League? Nay, is there not here an expreſs mention of that ſpecies of power that ſhall be employed in ſuppreſſing hereſy? If there be any difference, is not the language limited here to *civil* power? Yet, ſtrange to tell, we are ſingled out as perſons of perſecuting principles, while the General Aſſociate Synod is the only body of Preſbyterians in Britain, which has received the Confeſſion of Faith with an expreſs exception as to theſe very articles. Your approbation of this Confeſſion, however, is ſo unlimited, when you ſay, "A "ſounder Confeſſion of Faith *cannot be deviſed* †," that one would ſuſpect you had overlooked theſe chapters.

You talk with a ſneer of the cauſe of that mournful breach which took place in the Synod, the religious clauſe in ſome Burgeſs-oaths ‡. I am fully ſenſible, that there was

* Pages 78, 79. † Page 111. ‡ Pages 96, 97.

was much ſinful heat of ſpirit in the management of this controverſy: and perhaps, had all proper means been uſed, Seceders might have been relieved from this oath entirely. Had magiſtrates, at leaſt, in thoſe days poſſeſſed the ſame liberality which diſtinguiſhes ſome in our time, it would not have been impoſed on ſuch as pleaded conſcientious difficulties.

But this was not ſo trifling a matter as you ſeem to repreſent it. An oath is at all times a very ſerious buſineſs. It is the moſt ſolemn appeal we can make on earth to the Judge of all. It is therefore of the laſt importance, that it ſhould in no inſtance be profaned. All who fear God, conſider it as one of the alarming ſigns of our times, that ſwearing by his great and dreadful name is reckoned a matter of very little conſequence; and that there is a dreadful and perhaps unexampled profanation of this ordinance. Now, you muſt admit that an oath is groſsly profaned, if it be underſtood in one ſenſe by the adminiſtrator, and in another by the ſwearer. For in this caſe, the deſign of an oath is defeated. It nowiſe ſerves "for confirmation," nor can it prove "an end of ſtrife." This evil, thoſe called Antiburghers wiſhed, according to their views, to prevent. Their call to attend to theſe oaths was peculiar; becauſe, as underſtood in the ſenſe of thoſe who invariably diſpenſed them, that is, as including the preſent ſtate of the religion eſtabliſhed by law, the ſwearing of them was a virtual abjuration of their Seceſſion from the eſtabliſhed church, and of their whole conſtitution as a diſtinct religious ſociety. But you ſeem to think they might quietly have ſwallowed this doſe, had they only diſgorged another, to you far more nauſeous. You might have excuſed them for ſwearing, although Diſſenters, that they "profeſſed and followed *with* "*all their hearts* the true religion, preſently profeſſed within "this realm, and authorized by its laws;" had they renounced that oath, the Solemn League, which, according to you, "was baniſhed the kingdom at the abdication of James II. "and was completely thrown into oblivion by the acceſſion "of King William, and the reſtoration of the conſtitution*."

By

* Page 84.

By the way I may obſerve, that it is ſomewhat ſingular, that you baniſh James and the Solemn League together; as if it were paying a compliment to the Revolution-Parliament, to inſinuate that the ſame ſentence was paſſed on a bigotted Papiſt and infatuated tyrant, who ſtruggled to deprive the nation of its liberties, both civil and religious, and on that engagement, which, for half a century, had proved the ſtrongeſt national bulwark againſt Popery and tyranny.

You alſo ſpeak as if the baniſhment of this oath had been indiſpenſably neceſſary to "the reſtoration of the conſtitution." But what *conſtitution* can you poſſibly intend? Was it that which had been previouſly *reſtored* at the reſtoration of Charles II.? You will not look for it, ſurely, in a reign of tyranny. Do you go back then to the æra of his father? As little will you there find the conſtitution adopted at the acceſſion of William III. The fact is, there was then no proper *reſtoration* of a conſtitution in civil matters. It was rather a renovation. It was ſettled on grounds never eſtabliſhed in any former reign. Every candid perſon muſt acknowledge, that, for the principles of civil liberty eſtabliſhed at the revolution, we are, under God, indebted to the covenanters. Under the ſhadow of that very oath, which is now treated as an exiled criminal, theſe principles germinated, flouriſhed, and brought forth that fruit of which the nation makes its boaſt. They attained this maturity, only as tenderly nurſed by the friends of that proſcribed oath, as protected by their unconquerable fortitude, and as watered by their blood.

You next proceed to a conſideration of the excommunication of thoſe who adhered to the Burgeſs-oath. Here it may be neceſſary to obſerve; that an approbation of this deed has never been made a term, either of Chriſtian, or of miniſterial communion. Thoſe who inflicted this cenſure acted, I am perſuaded, according to their light. But there is ground to believe, that the generality of thoſe who ſucceeded them would not have gone ſo far. There is no reaſon, however, for heightening the picture, by the addition of circumſtances that never had any real exiſtence. When exhibiting

hibiting the character of this body of Seceders, indeed, you evidently prefer the ſhade to the light. You have certainly borrowed your ſketches from thoſe who are peculiarly inimical to their profeſſion.

You give us a "fearful inſtance" of "the dreadful ex-"ceſſes into which bigotry and party-ſpirit have hurried "well-intentioned men, and how every moral obligation "has been violated" to the ſuppreſſion of the very "feel-"ings of nature." What is it, pray? When the famous E-"benezer Erſkine," who adhered to the Burghers, was to be excommunicated, "to *ſhed a glory over the operation*, "the amputation-knife was committed to the hands of his "own ſon. John, under the impulſe of youthful ardour, "aimed at the higheſt honours of Seceſſion. John, the ſon, "was ſelected by the Synod of Perth, to pronounce the aw-"ful ſentence on Ebenezer the father; which he had the "firmneſs, or the inſenſibility to execute*." A very ſhocking ſtory indeed!—if true. Here you not only preſume to judge of the ſecret motives of *one*, but charge *all* the miniſters concerned in this ſentence, with a barbarous reſolution of trampling under foot the "moſt ſacred emo-"tions of the human heart." I have made the moſt accurate inquiry into circumſtances I poſſibly could, that I might ſtate them fairly; and I am enabled to do ſo, in many inſtances, from the Proceedings of the Aſſociate Synod, printed by their authority at Edinburgh, 1750. And, in the firſt place, John was not the *ſon* of Ebenezer; he was only his *nephew*. Ebenezer never had a ſon a member of Synod. Secondly, the excommunication of all the Burgher brethren took place in Edinburgh, at the time of the meeting of Synod. All that remained to be done afterwards, was to intimate the ſentence of Synod in their ſeveral congregations. At that time the Synod of *Perth* had no exiſtence. Thirdly, Mr John Erſkine, ſo far from being "carried away by youthful ardour," and "aiming at the "higheſt honours of the Seceſſion," at firſt took what you call "the moderate ſide;" and, at that meeting at which the

* Page 97.

the breach in the Synod took place, adhered to the party called Burghers. If he " aimed at the higheſt honours of " the Seceſſion," it was in a way not very pleaſing to fleſh and blood. For, as I am aſſured by an aged miniſter, a perſon of well known judgment and moderation, who was intimately acquainted with him, on his return home he fell under ſtrong convictions that he had acted wrong; and on ſome ſabbath after, of his own accord, in his own congregation, publicly acknowledged that he had done ſo. When he afterwards appeared at the Synod of thoſe called Antiburghers, he attained " the higheſt honours," in the way of acknowledging the ſinfulneſs of his conduct in a variety of ſteps in this matter, and of being *rebuked* on this ground. His acknowledgments are particularly ſpecified in the publiſhed *Proceedings* *. The ſame gentleman, in reference to the motives you impute to Mr Erſkine, obſerves; " All " who knew Mr John Erſkine, knew him to be a man of " ſimplicity and godly ſincerity, and as far from any ſuch " views, as Mr Hill's inſinuation, founded only in his own " imagination, is from the *charity* that *thinketh no evil*, " which Mr Hill profeſſes, and which I hope he at other " times exerciſes."

In the fourth place, " the amputation-knife was *not* com- " mitted into the hand of" Mr John Erſkine. As far as I can learn, he voted for the excommunication; although it does not appear with certainty from the printed minutes. According to the information of the member of Synod formerly referred to, he was not urged to vote; but the Synod did not think it proper not to call his name when the vote was going round. His judgment, it is ſaid, was ſo clear in the matter, that he durſt not decline voting, though with deep regret, from the conſideration of the ſinful conduct of thoſe whom it concerned. It has alſo been aſſerted, that his father, however much irritated, acknowledged his perſuaſion that " what John did was from conſcience."

There is no neceſſity for entering into the queſtion, whether this ſentence was right or wrong. Every man in our communion

* Page 28.

communion is at liberty to judge as he pleaſes, with reſpect to this deed. The only queſtion here is, whether Mr John Erſkine and the Synod were actuated by the motives which you aſcribe to them. Enough has been ſaid to ſhew that your charge againſt the former is ill-founded. After all, you may condemn him, "as trampling under foot the "*moſt ſacred* emotions of the human heart," however clear his conſcience was as to the cenſure, for having any hand in it, when it reſpected perſons ſo nearly related. But it is dangerous work to judge another. The Lord hath given the power of cenſure to the church, in all caſes, "to edification, "not to deſtruction." Suppoſing that, in ſome inſtance, the higheſt cenſure were *really neceſſary*, according to the ſcriptural rule, could a man who was fully perſuaded that this was the caſe, and that it might be a mean of ſalvation, excuſe himſelf from taking any part in it, merely from the conſideration of the ties of *nature?* Would he be altogether free from the charge of "conferring with fleſh and blood?" Would there be no "reſpect of perſons" in ſuch conduct? Does the bleſſing of *Levi* convey no inſtruction to us? Or muſt *he* be condemned for "trampling under foot the *moſt* "*ſacred* emotions of the human heart?" By what ſpirit is it ſaid of him? "Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy "holy one, whom thou didſt *prove* at Maſſah,—who ſaid "unto his father, and to his mother, I have not ſeen him; "neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his "own children: for they have obſerved thy word, and kept "thy covenant *."

With reſpect to the Synod, they acted in a manner entirely the reverſe of what you aſſert. Inſtead of employing Mr John Erſkine to pronounce or intimate the ſentence, either as to his *father* or *uncle*, he was not employed in any caſe whatever. The ſentence againſt three of the ſeparating brethren, of whom Mr Ralph Erſkine was one, was pronounced at Edinburgh, Auguſt 10. 1749, by Mr George Brown Moderator, and afterwards intimated at Dunfermline, where Mr Erſkine was Miniſter, by Mr Adam Gib,

 according

* Deut. xxxiii. 8, 9.

according to appointment *. When Mr Ebenezer Erſkine, with the reſt of the Miniſters adhering to him, were afterwards excommunicated, the ſentence was pronounced at Edinburgh, 15th February 1750, by Mr William Campbell their Moderator; and by appointment of Synod, intimated at Stirling, where Mr Ebenezer Erſkine had his charge, by Mr Thomas Mair; and by Mr Andrew Thomſon at Falkirk, where Mr Henry Erſkine, brother to Mr John, was miniſter †. Although thirteen different miniſters were employed by the Synod, either in pronouncing or in intimating this ſentence, and one of theſe twice; yet the name of Mr John Erſkine is not to be found in the whole liſt. So far then were the Synod, from wiſhing "to ſhed a glory over the "operation," from "committing the amputation-knife to "the hand" of a man's "own ſon," or even of his own nephew, ſo far were they from doing any thing that tended to make one of their members "trample under foot," what you call "the moſt ſacred emotions of the human heart," that they could not poſſibly have acted towards him with greater tenderneſs. *He*, of his own accord, had given his vote for the ſentence, becauſe he conſidered it as his duty; and this might have formed a ſufficient apology for the Synod, although they had appointed him to intimate the ſentence in ſome one caſe where he was not particularly connected: but they would do nothing, in the way of authority, that might lay him under a neceſſity of taking any further ſtep than what his own conſcience abſolutely required. Judge with yourſelf then, Sir, if this relation be, as you ſay, "a fearful "inſtance" of its having "been imagined that the more the "feelings of nature were ſuppreſſed, the more meritorious "was the ſervice."

From what has already appeared, you muſt ſee whether the ſtory you relate, concerning "a plain looking country-"man," has much claim to credit. I have never met with any body who heard the ſtory before. No man could hear Mr Erſkine pronounce a ſentence which he never pronounced. Another ſtory is told, from which this might be manufactured.

* Proceedings of Synod, p. 48,—50. † Ibid. p. 58, 59.

nufactured. It is aſſerted, on good authority, I believe, that when a *woman* outrageouſly accoſted him on the ſtreet in theſe "words: How could you ſit in your Synod, and give your ho-"neſt father to the devil?" he gravely replied, "Woman, "when I ſit in the courts of Chriſt, I ſit as no man's ſon."

The improvement you make of your ſtory is totally without foundation. "Erſkine," you ſay, "ill at eaſe before, "was deeply conſcience-ſtruck at this repreſentation, fell "into languor and dejection, and ſoon became the victim of "a bigotted ſpirit, which had dared to trample under foot "the moſt ſacred emotions of the human heart *." Here, Sir, as in other inſtances, from your diſlike to the peculiar principles of Seceders, you have given way to credulity, co-operating with a conſiderable degree of aſperity. Mr John Erſkine, when a ſtudent, fell under ſuch deep concern as to the ſtate of his ſoul, as had almoſt deprived him of the exerciſe of his reaſon. From this he obtained a gracious deliverance. But in conſequence of it he was ſubject to habitual penſiveneſs, and to abſence in converſation; although nothing of this kind appeared in his public miniſtrations. This circumſtance may have been, through miſapprehenſion or otherwiſe, connected with his conduct with reſpect to the excommunication; although it took place ſome years before this event, and even before there was any controverſy among Seceders about the Burgeſs-oath. I pretend to give no judgment as to the propriety of Mr Erſkine's conduct; but am aſſured, on the information of ſome, on whoſe teſtimony I can rely, that he never afterwards teſtified any diſſatisfaction with it; nay, that he expreſſed his clearneſs as to the whole affair on his death-bed. He died of no *languor* or *dejection*, but of a violent fever, in May 1751, or 1752. As his death took place in Edinburgh, and as his father viſited him during his illneſs; had he been in the ſituation mentioned, it would have been no ſecret.

As if the Seceders were not yet black enough, you give them another ſtroke with your bruſh. "Even meeting for "private or family prayer," you ſay, "has been judged a ſuf-

* Page 98.

" ficient ground of church-cenſure and excommunication *." Dear Sir, you certainly give your faith to what is told you, on very ſlender grounds. I will ſay nothing ſtronger. I have had better opportunity of being acquainted with Seceders than you, as I have ſpent my life among them. But I can declare, that I never knew nor heard of any inſtance of the kind you mention. Seceders bluſh not to avow it as their ſentiment, that they cannot conſiſtently hold eccleſiaſtical communion with other religious ſocieties. But they conſider it as their duty, as called in Providence, to hold Chriſtian fellowſhip, in " private or family prayer," with all who appear to be ſaints. Never did a body of diſſenters make its appearance, without being the butt of a thouſand falſe accuſations. Perhaps, *you* have found this verified in England. You ſhould not therefore have believed all you heard in this country. Your reflection in the preſent inſtance brings to my remembrance a ſtory, the truth of which I can atteſt from perſonal knowledge. Being in a mixed company, an old lady of the Epiſcopal communion, who was preſent, was at length told that the perſon, with whom ſhe was talking very cordially, was a Seceder. This ſhe flatly denied, again and again declaring that this was impoſſible. " For," ſaid ſhe, " this is a cheerful " man. But I know Seceders too well to believe that he is " one. For when I lived in" ſuch a place, " if a Seceder " had but *laughed*, he would have been brought to the ſeſ- " ſion."

After ſpeaking of the controverſy concerning the Burgeſs-oath, you add; " Another mighty diſpute aroſe in a certain " town in Scotland, reſpecting bleſſing the bread at the com- " munion, whether it ſhould be bleſſed while lying on the " table, or after it had been lifted up; and on this famous " contention they divided into two parties, the one called " *Lifters* and the other *Anti-lifters*, and the reſult of the " diſpute was to give ſuch a triumph to the profane at large, " as to ſet them againſt all religion whatſoever †."

On this ſtatement it is neceſſary to make a few remarks. And

* Page 99. † Page 98.

And firſt, you do not exhibit the queſtion in ſuch a light, that any one, formerly unacquainted with it, could form a juſt idea of the matter of controverſy. It was not properly whether the bread "ſhould be bleſſed while lying on the "table, or after it had been lifted up." For no one objected to its being bleſſed, *while* lying on the table; no one urged that it ſhould be bleſſed, *while* lifted up. This was the real ſtate of the caſe. It had been a cuſtom pretty general in Scotland, for miniſters to take the bread and the cup into their hands before prayer. Now it appears from the words of inſtitution that this was the method obſerved by our Saviour, as to the bread at leaſt; although it cannot be proved that he did not in this follow the ordinary practice of the father of a family among the Jews, even in their common meals. But many writers having explained this circumſtance as ſymbolical of his aſſumption of our nature; a number of ſerious people conſidered it as eſſential to the ordinance of the Supper, or contended at leaſt that it was ſafeſt literally to adhere to the method obſerved by our Saviour. Hence they took offence at the conduct of thoſe who omitted this circumſtance, and at length brought the matter before the Synod. They ordained that both miniſters and people ſhould exerciſe forbearance with each other on this head, and that every one ſhould be at liberty to obſerve that method which was moſt agreeable to his own mind. This act of forbearance was very unacceptable to ſome, who wiſhed it to be enjoined on all miniſters to take the bread and the cup before prayer. One worthy miniſter, whoſe body and mind were both labouring under the infirmities of age, and who, it was generally believed, was ſpurred on by ſome contentious perſons in his own congregation; on the ground of the ſentence of forbearance, gave in a declinature and left the Synod. He connected himſelf with another miniſter, who ſome years before had left the Synod, becauſe of their judgment in a *perſonal* cauſe. A Preſbytery being formed, they were afterwards joined by a brother, who had been laid under cenſure on account of immoral conduct, and by a conſiderable number of people belonging to

different

different congregations in the weſt of Scotland. But they have now dwindled down to one ſmall congregation.

Such is the real hiſtory of this "mighty diſpute," "this "famous contention." The reader muſt ſee, with what propriety it is ſaid, "They divided into two parties;"—language, eſpecially as viewed in its connection, which would naturally ſuggeſt the idea of ſuch a *diviſion* as had been occaſioned by the controverſy with reſpect to the Burgeſs-oath, of which an account is given in the words immediately preceding.

As to the names *Lifters* and *Anti-lifters*, I am an entire ſtranger to them. If uſed in any particular place, they were unknown to the greateſt part of Scotland. The ſeparating party was ſo very inconſiderable, that it muſt appear extremely improbable that they would have it in their power to fix a new deſignation on the church which they left.

To this controverſy you aſcribe an *eventual* importance which it never had. The *profane* will ſtill *triumph* at diſputes of any kind in the church. That this, as managed on one ſide, had a tendency to hurt the intereſts of religion, I have no doubt. But "the profane at large" did not trouble themſelves about it; as it was in a great meaſure confined to one quarter of the country. It is at any rate hard to conceive, how this diſpute could have ſo powerful an effect, as to "*ſet* thoſe againſt all religion whatſoever," who were already *profane*.

On the whole, I muſt obſerve, that I am at a loſs to perceive what *good* end you could have in view, in introducing an account of this diſpute; and eſpecially one ſo indiſtinct, ſo imperfect, ſo apt to increaſe the prejudices of others againſt a religious ſociety. I would wiſh to judge as favourably as poſſible of your deſign, of the *intentio operantis*. But certain I am, the *intentio operis*, the direct tendency of the thing itſelf, is only to expoſe Seceders to ridicule. And ſtill more ſo, as the narrative is ſo maimed. For the conduct of the Synod and of the great body of the Seceſſion, in this affair, when fairly repreſented, inſtead of holding them up to contempt, muſt be approved by every candid perſon

as

as a proof of their wiſdom and moderation. Was it "the "reſult of the diſpute—to give ſuch a triumph to the pro- "fane at large, as to ſet them againſt all religion whatſoe- "ver!" And can the recording of it, the publication of it in many places where it had never been heard of, wreſt their trophies from them? Does it not tend rather to perpetuate their triumph, and even to extend it?

On this plan, Sir, there is not a church on earth, that may not be held up to ridicule. Were the church of England, of which you are a member, as little known in Scotland, as the Seceſſion church is in England; would you think it fair, if I, or if any man, after a tour of a few weeks through the one country, in attempting to deſcribe the religion there eſtabliſhed to the inhabitants of the other, ſhould dwell on thoſe circumſtances which would be leaſt calculated to exhibit that profeſſion in a favourable light? Would you think it fair, if I ſhould tell them in my remarks, that the members of the church of England were "the greateſt ſticklers for that ſort of righteouſneſs *," which conſiſts in the uſe of particular veſtments; and that a "mighty diſpute" had ariſen among them about the particular colour which a ſervant of Chriſt ſhould wear in miniſtring to the church, that ſome were willing to wear *black*, but that others would have no communion with them, unleſs they wore *white*; that the *ſhape* was conſidered as a matter of no leſs moment than the *colour*, as if the taylor and his ſciſſars were as neceſſary to the conſtitution of a clergyman, as the biſhop and his paſtoral ſtaff;—nay, that theſe good men had "divided into two parties" about this point, which was confeſſedly a matter of indifference, and that the ſticklers for the *white* colour abuſed the adherents to the *black*, as Puritans and Schiſmatics? Would it give a ſtranger a proper idea of the church of England, to declare that ſhe had been greatly agitated by "a famous contention," not with reſpect to the elements uſed in the Lord's Supper, or any thing concerning them; but as to the particular ſpot in the church where the *table* ſhould ſtand, on which theſe elements

* Page 98.

elements ſhould be placed; that ſome contended for the *middle* of the church, and others no leſs ſtrenuouſly for one *end* of it? Though all this were ſaid, it might perhaps be proved as eaſily as ſome things you have aſſerted?

You inform us in the title-page, that your work is "de-"ſigned to promote brotherly love and forbearance among "Chriſtians of all denominations." But it is ſcarcely conceivable that a book ſhould more flatly contradict its title. Can it tend "to promote brotherly love," to rake up all the differences that have taken place among profeſſors in this country for more than a century? Have the two claſſes of Seceders manifeſted much "virulence and acrimony of "ſpirit;" and can the revival of the affair of the excommunication, which has been in a great meaſure dormant for many years, operate as an anodyne? Can it promote either love or forbearance, to revive this affair with the addition of a number of aggravating circumſtances, which never had an exiſtence? May not theſe be believed, on the ground of your unqualified aſſertion, by ſome who are more credulous, or more *acrimonious?* Can it "promote brotherly love and "*forbearance*" between Seceders "and Chriſtians of all de-"nominations," to aſſure the latter, that Seceders partake ſo much of the ſpirit of *forbearance*, as to reckon themſelves bound "to extirpate all religions but their own, with the "ſame civil ſword which their anceſtors once wore *?"

There

* When taking notice of the charge of perſecution brought againſt Seceders, I ought to have obſerved that the Aſſociate [Burgher] Synod, paſſed an Act, in the year 1797, in which they agreed that the following declaration ſhould be prefixed to the *Formula;* "Whereas ſome parts of the "ſtanding books of this Synod have been interpreted as favouring com-"pulſory meaſures in religion; the Synod hereby declare, That they do "not require an approbation of any ſuch principle from any candidate "for licenſe or ordination: And whereas a controverſy has ariſen among "us reſpecting the nature and kind of the obligation of our ſolemn co-"venants on poſterity, whether it be entirely of the ſame kind upon us "as upon our anceſtors who ſwore them; the Synod hereby declare, "That while they hold the obligation of our covenants upon poſterity, "they do not interfere with that controverſy which hath ariſen reſpect-"ing the nature and kind of it; and recommend to all their members to "ſuppreſs that controverſy, as tending to gender ſtrife rather than godly "edifying."

There is too much juſtice in the remark which a friend of mine, of another communion, waggiſhly made on your mode of conciliation. It ſeemed to him, he ſaid, "to pro-"mote brotherly love and forbearance," in the very ſame way in which boys did it among a parcel of dogs, when they clapped their hands and irritated them, till they had got them all ſet a-worrying one another.

Give me leave to ſay, Sir, that your looſe ideas with reſpect to church-fellowſhip lead you aſtray from the exerciſe of that candour which you profeſs, and which I am perſuaded you wiſh to preſerve. The ardour of your zeal againſt *bigotry*, occaſionally hurries you into ſomething very like *illiberality*. Becauſe others cannot ſee with your eyes, you treat them as if they were blind, and even wilfully ſo. Speaking of the unity of miniſters of different denominations in England, and of their aſſiſting each other, you aſk; "What order is broken thereby, but the order of the devil, "*divide et impera* (divide and rule) and the order of the "Pope, which, when tranſlated into modern *ſectarian* Pro-"teſtant language, ſtands thus: *It is againſt the order of our "church* *." But, Sir, this is not always "the order of "the devil." He ſometimes alters it not a little. His order is, *uni et impera*, (unite and rule.) For he often appears "as an angel of light." It was an *order* of this kind that he endeavoured to eſtabliſh by the inſtrumentality of the Samaritans, when they ſaid to the Jews, "Let us build "with you; for we ſeek your God as ye do." But Zerubbabel and Joſhua would not comply with it. They had no idea of union without unity. They replied; "We our-"ſelves together will build †."

I muſt alſo differ from you, when you ſay that this is "the order of the Pope." *Union* has been the great ſcheme of Rome; union, often at the expence of ſacrificing what ſhe called truth. Is it not a well known fact, that ſhe has admitted many to her fellowſhip, although differing from her in a variety of articles, on the ground of their acknowledging the juriſdiction of her ghoſtly father. If men will

* Page 121. † Ezra iv. 2, 3.

not go ſo far as to receive "the mark of the beaſt in their "foreheads;" it will pleaſe her, if they receive it "in their "hands." Many who have not the mark, are reckoned among her ſons, if they have "the name of the beaſt, or the "number of his name." Her great object has been *Catholiciſm*. For promoting this end, has not the Pope given his ſanction equally to various orders, holding doctrines diametrically oppoſite. For he has ſtill conſidered *union*, although of a baſtard kind, as the beſt foundation for that univerſal *empire* which he arrogates. *Unite* and *rule* hath been the order both of the Devil and of the Pope, in the different plans that have been laid for reconciling the Proteſtants to Rome, at the expence of truth. Thus have theſe allies endeavoured to regain the power they loſt by means of the Reformation. It hath been the plan of the devil, to unite Socinians, Arminians, and Calviniſts, under the idea that the points in diſpute were not of ſufficient importance to warrant ſeparation.

Do not miſtake me, as if I mentioned theſe inſtances as exactly parallel to what you refer to. My principal deſign is to ſhew that the devil has not uniformly adhered to one kind of *order*; and that the Pope has generally obſerved a courſe entirely the reverſe of what you aſcribe to him. But although the *unity* you extol be not carried the ſame length; if it be at the expence of divine truth, it ought to be remembered that "greater and leſs do not vary the "kind." What if the "order broken thereby" be neither the order of the devil, nor that of the Pope, but of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt? "The wiſdom that is from above is *firſt* pure, "*then* peaceable." We are to "keep the *unity of the Spi-* "*rit* in the bond of peace *." The ſcripture knows no unity among church-members but that of the Spirit: and we are under the ſtrongeſt obligation to keep this unity, as far as the authority of *the Spirit* extends in the word of revelation. This undoubtedly extends, not merely to ſuch doctrines as are neceſſary to be believed in order to ſalvation, but to thoſe in which Chriſtians may differ, although agreeing in

* Eph. iv. 3.

in fundamentals. That Spirit, whoſe unity we are to keep, requires of a church, by the name of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, that her members "all ſpeak the ſame thing, and that there "be no diviſions among them; but that they be perfectly "joined together in the ſame mind, and in the ſame judg-"ment *."

If one be perſuaded that Epiſcopacy is the ſcriptural form of church-government; another, that this is Preſbytery; a third, that Independency has a preferable claim; a fourth, that no particular form is determined in ſcripture; if theſe perſons join in eccleſiaſtical fellowſhip, can it be ſaid that they "all ſpeak the ſame thing, and that there is no divi-"ſion among them," but "that they are *perfectly* joined to-"gether?" If one of them believe Epiſcopacy to be no other than the hierarchy of Rome, and another conſider Independency as eccleſiaſtical anarchy, and a third object to Preſbytery as a ſpecies of tyranny; are they notwithſtanding *united* "in the ſame mind, and in the ſame judgment." Although no one will conſider this as a point immediately concerned with ſalvation, is the authority of Chriſt, is "the unity of "the Spirit," is the glory of God no way intereſted in it? Do even theſe who adhere to the different forms mentioned, conſider none of them as determined in ſcripture? In this caſe, they have ſtill leſs excuſe. For they adhere to different forms without any neceſſity from conſcience, and therefore uſe not all the means in their power for being "per-"fectly joined together." When I reflect on theſe things, it pains me to find that you expreſs yourſelf in this language; "I *deliberately* ſay, theſe are the tricks of hell itſelf "to divide the church of God on earth." After all your *deliberation*, this hard ſentence would require a little more thought from you.

"By what authority," you inquire, "do any of theſe "churches preſume to ſet up *their order*, in oppoſition to "the mind, and will, and work of God, and to quote the "order of their churches, forſooth, againſt the living rules "and orders of the church of the Lord Jeſus †?" Certainly,

* 1 Cor. i. 10. † Page 121.

they have none, Sir. Here we are agreed. Such *order* is that of the devil. But although it ſhould be occaſionally ſaid of any thing, "It is againſt the order of our church;" it does not neceſſarily follow that it is therefore "againſt the "living rules and orders of the church of the Lord Jeſus." It can be no recommendation of any doctrine or practice, that it is againſt the order of any church, except in as far as it can be proved that this order is agreeable to the authority of Chriſt. For no man, no church on earth, hath any lordſhip over conſcience. If then, the language you refer to be uſed as *of itſelf* containing a ſufficient reaſon for any thing, it is abſurd and highly preſumptuous. But ſtill this very language may be uſed innocently, in as far as it is underſtood and believed, in conſequence of due examination, that the order referred to is agreeable to the only rule. There is no reaſon, however, for denominating this "mo-"dern *ſectarian* language;" if the term be meant to expreſs the tenets of thoſe called *ſectaries*, as contradiſtinguiſhed from an eſtabliſhed church. For no Proteſtant church hath ever gone farther, in the authoritative uſe of this language, than that of which you declare yourſelf a member. If you confine the term *ſectarian* to thoſe who diſſent from an eſtabliſhed church, you act unfairly. If, on the other hand, you extend it to all the diviſions of Proteſtants, as including the church of England, you do not treat her very reſpectfully; becauſe you ſay plainly enough that the order of the church to which you adhere, is "the order of the Pope," nay, "the order of the devil."

But all this is introductory to another blow at the Seceſſion. For it immediately follows; "By what order or "part of Scripture did the Seceders, after they had moſt "cordially received, and had taſted the life and power of "Mr Whitefield's miniſtry, preſume to mock God with a "day of ſolemn faſting and prayer, as if he had been the "greateſt hypocrite that ever lived, merely becauſe he re-"fuſed to be crammed with their Solemn League and Co-"venant; while they knew, or might have known, that not "a brighter, or a more diſintereſted luminary had ariſen

"for

" for a century before him*?" From your language, one would ſuppoſe that Mr Whitefield had been " cordially re- " ceived" by the Seceders in their eccleſiaſtical capacity. But according to the beſt of my information, he was invited to this country only by one miniſter, without any authority from the Aſſociate Preſbytery. This was Mr Ralph Erſkine, who hearing of the appearance Mr Whitefield made in England, ſuppoſed that he might be ready to co-operate with Seceders in reformation. Some time after Mr Whitefield's coming to Scotland, the Preſbytery, or members of it, had a converſation with him. It is likely enough that the Solemn League might be mentioned in this converſation. But it has ſtill been underſtood, that the direct and principal reaſon of difference was about church-government. On this head an anecdote is commonly told, of the truth of which there ſeems to be no reaſon to doubt. After a good deal of reaſoning as to a particular form of church-government being preſcribed in Scripture, Mr Whitefield, laying his hand on his heart, ſaid, " I do not " find it here." Mr Alexander Moncrieff, who was of a warm temper, giving a rap on the Bible, which was lying on the table, replied; " But I find it here." On this, if I miſtake not, the converſation terminated: and it has ſtill been aſſerted, that the proper ground of their giving up any connexion with Mr Whitefield, was his poſitive denial that any particular form of church-government was of divine authority, and declaring his reſolution to maintain this in his public miniſtrations.

Your charge againſt the Seceding brethren, that they " preſumed to mock God with a day of ſolemn faſting and " prayer," is a hard one. It is far from diſcovering that ſpirit of meekneſs, which ought to be exerciſed even towards thoſe " who oppoſe themſelves" to the truth. I will not anſwer you in your own ſtile, leſt I ſhould be found guilty of " rendering railing for railing." You doubtleſs refer to an Act of the Aſſociate Preſbytery for a Public Faſt, paſſed 15th July, 1742. But you evidently ſhew great want

* Page 122.

want of information; for I am unwilling to ſuppoſe wilful perverſion. As far as I can learn, there was nothing in that Act which implied the idea of Mr Whitefield being a hypocrite, nothing reſpecting his ſtate. Strange indeed! that men cannot teſtify, according to their conſciences, againſt the irregular or unſcriptural courſes of others, without being ſubjected to the accuſation of treating them as *hypocrites!* Eccleſiaſtical communion cannot proceed ſimply on the ground of my perſuaſion that another is in a ſtate of grace. It muſt alſo reſpect both his profeſſion and his practice. Miniſterial communion has a ſimilar reference. I have no reaſon to form a ſevere judgment either concerning the ſtate, or the intentions of Mr Whitefield; but have ſtill been diſpoſed to think favourably of both. This, however, affects not the queſtion. We may believe that a man's miniſtry is attended with "life and power," that in many reſpects he is a "bright luminary," and yet have no ſcriptural warrant to countenance his miniſtrations. I may withdraw from one as "walking diſorderly," and ſtill count him "a brother." The Seceders thought they had "an order—of Scripture," a "living rule and order—of "the Lord Jeſus," to withdraw in this caſe; becauſe he, when giving a commiſſion to his ſervants to "*teach* all na-"tions," reſtricts not their teaching to the peculiar doctrines of Chriſtianity, but expreſsly ſays, "Teaching them "to obſerve *all things* whatſoever I have commanded you." Now, they have viewed the government, worſhip and diſcipline of the church as included in this univerſal language. But Mr Whitefield denied that Chriſt had given the church any particular form of government, nay, did ſo in the ſtrongeſt terms in his public miniſtrations; and continued in communion with a church whoſe worſhip was polluted by many ſuperſtitions, and which had no diſcipline except what was inflicted by lay-courts, and of a civil nature. Had they aſſociated with him, they had "built again what" they, and what the church of Scotland had all along "deſtroyed," and ſo made themſelves "tranſgreſſors." To uſe your own words, although in a ſenſe directly oppoſite, they would

have

have been "led into a labyrinth of confuſion," by "leaving "their *Bibles* and the ſimplicity that is in Chriſt."

You indeed avow the very ſame principle with Mr Whitefield, and on the very ſame ground. "Till I can "find," you ſay, "where the mode of church-government "is preciſely fixed in Scripture, I ſhall ſtill keep up Chriſ-"tian communion with all real believers wherever I find "them; as I have to deal in point of communion not with "the *defects* of churches, but that I may unite with them "who are united to our common Lord, to whatever church "they may belong*." We alſo account it our privilege, as we have opportunity in Providence, to hold *Chriſtian* communion with all who ſeem to be real believers. You, however, evidently underſtand the term *Chriſtian* in a more extenſive ſenſe, as including communion in *public* ordinances. But it will be difficult for you to prove that you have "not to deal in point of communion with the *defects* of "churches." You have undoubtedly to deal with the *defects* of individuals, whether as to doctrine or practice. For we are "commanded, in the name of the Lord Jeſus, to "withdraw from every *brother* that walketh diſorderly†." And if from every *brother*, why not from every *church* of this deſcription? If there be any difference, we have an argument from the leſs to the greater. There is more danger ariſing from fellowſhip with a collective body of men who walk "diſorderly," than from fellowſhip with an individual, as the diſhonour done to the great Head is alſo greater, in proportion to the number of offenders, and the temptation they have to harden each other in their ſinful courſes. From men "who conſent not to wholeſome words, "even the words of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and to the doc-"trine which is according to godlineſs," the ſervant of the Lord is commanded to "withdraw himſelf‡." But how does he "withdraw himſelf" from ſuch men, if he hold communion with that church which continues to acknowledge them as members, nay, as teachers; although their errors are evident as the light of day? I reaſon on no other ground

* Page 109. † 2 Theſſ. iii. 6. ‡ 1 Tim. vi. 3,—5.

ground than what you have yourſelf taken up: "When "the head is ſick," you ſay, "the diſeaſe is found to com- "municate itſelf to the body at large. When diſcipline is "corrupted at the fountain-head, the ſtreams, rather than "purify, will aſſuredly pollute *." When "the unclean "thing" is ſuffered to remain, the Spirit of God preſcribes one way only in which we can avoid being defiled by it; "Come out from among them, and be ye ſeparate †." That command, "Come out of her my people, that ye be not "partakers of her ſins ‡," incudes the ſame idea. It immediately refers to the church of Rome. But it muſt be applicable to every church, that, like this Babylon, refuſes to be "healed."

This neceſſarily flows from the nature of a church. For her members, although "many, are," as to their profeſſion, "one body in Chriſt, and every one members one of ano- "ther §." They are "one bread, and one body:" and this eſpecially appears from the ordinance of the Supper; "for we are all partakers of that one bread ‖." They ſolemnly declare, that as really as they eat "one bread," they have "one faith."

Your argument indeed proves more than you wiſh, and therefore nothing. It proves that there ſhould never be ſeparation from a church, however corrupted. If, "in "point of communion, we have not to deal with the *defects* "of churches," the glorious Reformation from Popery was unneceſſary; it was ſchiſm to leave the church of Rome. If you are reſolved to maintain "communion with all real "believers, *wherever* you find them;" then, with Papiſts alſo: for ſurely, you have more liberality than to ſuppoſe that there are no "real believers" within the pale of their church. According to your avowed reſolution you could have no objection to hold miniſterial or Chriſtian communion with a *Janſeniſt*; although acknowledging the ſupremacy of the Pope.

If in communion you have nothing to do with the *defects* of

* Page 115. † 1 Cor. vi. 17. ‡ Rev. xviii. 4.
§ Rom. xii. 5. ‖ 1 Cor. x. 17.

of a church, I ſhould imagine you can have as little to do with her *excellencies*. For the idea is deſtructive of the very nature of communion. A man might as well pretend, that when he enters into partnerſhip in trade, he is to ſhare in all the *gain*, but in no part of the *loſs*. Communion cannot be regulated by the inclination of the individual, either ſecret or declared; but by the ſenſe of the body. Such communion as you lay claim to, cannot poſſibly be had in any *viſible* church. I truſt, both you and I enjoy it through a more certain medium. In the one bleſſed Head, we have communion with each other, and with all ſaints, however impure the ſocieties to which they belong; without having to deal in any degree with their *defects*, or with thoſe of each other. Thus we have fellowſhip of a ſpotleſs kind, even in the preſent ſtate, in as far as we "hold the head;" fellowſhip of a more extenſive nature than what you ſpeak of; fellowſhip with the whole church inviſible, the whole myſtical body of Chriſt. Nor has your reaſoning on this point ſo much of the ſpirit of *charity* as might ſeem at firſt view. For if *ſaintſhip* be the formal ground of your holding communion with others, you do worſe than *excommunicate* all to whom you deny it. You virtually pronounce them to be in a ſtate of condemnation.

You produce another argument elſewhere, which ſeems equally untenable. "Wherever I find the church, where "the Maſter's preſence is vouchſafed, to withdraw and to "be abſent ſeems to me to be an immediate affront to him "whoſe gracious preſence they enjoy*." Why then "withdraw and be abſent" from the church of Rome? For "finding the church" and "the Maſter's preſence being "vouchſafed," are certainly here uſed as ſynonymous expreſſions. Now doubtleſs you will not deny that "the "Maſter's preſence is vouchſafed" to ſome within the pale of the Romiſh church. But is this the rule of our duty? They reſiſt his call, "Come out of her, my people." Yet we have reaſon to think, ſo ſovereign is his grace, that he does not altogether withdraw from them. Yet it would

* Preface, page x.

be "an immediate affront to him whoſe gracious preſence "they enjoy," did you or I hold communion with them. He has no where given his own gracious and ſovereign conduct as the rule of ours, but his word. He ſtill refers us to "the law and the teſtimony." We have no right to limit him; but he has an unqueſtionable right to limit us.

You add; "Am I wiſer than my Maſter, to know with "whom I ſhould unite?" It is for this very reaſon, that we are infinitely leſs *wiſe* than he, that he gives us a different rule from that which you propoſe to walk by. You and I would need nothing leſs than *his* wiſdom, to know with certainty the extent of his "gracious preſence," and therefore the pretended rule of our fellowſhip. Nor do you need to aſk; "Can I do wrong if I follow his holy footſteps, "wherever he may condeſcend to lead?" You may do much wrong, in attempting to follow his footſteps, if you make his *ſovereignty* the rule of your duty. His footſteps are ſtill *holy;* therefore he can never "do wrong." Ours are at beſt polluted. He can hold communion with his people amidſt much pollution, without being himſelf defiled. But if we preſume to imitate his conduct in this reſpect, we may ſoon find reaſon to repent of our raſhneſs. However *holy* his *footſteps* here, he does not intend to *lead* us by means of theſe, but by that "ſure word of prophecy, "to which we do well to take heed."

You ſay in another place: "I am ſatisfied, my only aim "is to invalidate the weak pretenſions of the bigot of e-"very party; and to convince Chriſtians in general, *pri-"vate diſcipline ſtill being preſerved*, that they are, or ought "to be, *one in Chriſt Jeſus* *." It is no new thing for men to conſider every pretenſion as *weak*, which is oppoſed to their own prepoſſeſſions; and every perſon as a *bigot*, whoſe ſentiments do not exactly tally with their own ſtandard. But hard or "bitter words" are ſomething very different from arguments. They may wound or frighten thoſe who are eaſily alarmed; but ſuch arrows frequently recoil on the hand that ſhoots them forth. That all true Chriſtians are

* Page 129.

are "one in Chriſt Jeſus," I am fully perſuaded. They are *one* as to ſpiritual communion, in all reſpects in which they have fellowſhip with him. But how they can be one as to eccleſiaſtical communion, which ſeems to be the ſenſe of your language, it is not eaſy to perceive. It is a ſoleciſm, to ſay that church members are *one*, while *preſerving different* modes of diſcipline. By *diſcipline* you evidently mean the whole ſyſtem of government and cenſure adopted by any church. Now, either diſcipline, according to the extenſive ſenſe in which you uſe the term, is a thing in which unity in Chriſt is nowiſe concerned; or it is. If the former, it hath nothing to do in the church. It is one of the doctrines of men; and therefore it ought not to be *preſerved*. Men go not ſo far in unity as they ſhould, while "private diſcipline" is retained. If, on the other hand, it is concerned with our being "one in Chriſt," men, holding fellowſhip in a church ſtate, are not thus *one*, in as far as each adheres to his own peculiar diſcipline. According to the preſent ſuppoſition, this is a matter in which they "ought to be one;" yet they are divided. One ſaith, I acknowledge Prelacy as the form of government appointed in the word; another, I know no divine form but Preſbytery; and a third, I reject both, and adhere to Independency. Do they ſit down at the Lord's table? Is not this a ſolemn profeſſion of their unity in Chriſt? Does it merely declare that they are members of the ſame myſtical body? No; it goes farther. All who communicate in any particular church, ſet their ſeal to the peculiar profeſſion of that church, and ſolemnly atteſt that they are *one* with her in her diſtinguiſhing principles. For this ordinance is a ſeal, not only of the great doctrines of religion, but of the peculiar tenets of that church in which it is diſpenſed. Without this, it muſt ceaſe to be a ſeal of a determinate nature, or indeed to deſerve the name; becauſe every one, an Arminian, an Arian, or a Socinian may give it what limits he pleaſes. No man could know how far his fellow-communicant meant to go with him in his profeſſion. It is even conceivable, that at the ſame celebration of this ordinance,

there might be ſo many exceptions made by a variety of individuals, one by one, and another by another; that all the peculiar doctrines of Chriſtianity might be left out among them. If it be not ſuch a ſeal as has been mentioned, I ſhould wiſh to know what are the particular doctrines which it ſeals, to the excluſion of others. A diſtinct enumeration of theſe, if ſupported by ſomething better than "weak "pretenſions," may be of great uſe to thoſe who conſcientiouſly labour under the yoke of *bigotry*.

The obſervation I have juſt now conſidered, is introductory to a compariſon of a very ſingular kind: "Now I "conceive *ſtrict* Independency to be the *Antiburgheriſm* of "the ſouth." The deſign of this compariſon may appear more diſtinctly from what you afterwards obſerve concerning Independents: "It is their idea that it is unlawful for a "miniſter to hold communion with any people but his own, "reſtricting the adminiſtration of ordinances alone to the "people who elected him to the office.—The very quint-"eſſence of Anti-burgheriſm ſublimated and refined *!" You have ſo "ſublimated and refined" your good ſenſe in this compariſon, that it has loſt much of its "quinteſſence" in the proceſs. The *reſiduum* is a mere vapour; and that too of the *mephitic* kind. You employ it, however, againſt what you call *Anti-burgheriſm*, the ghoſt of which ſeems to haunt you wherever you turn yourſelf, much in the ſame way as Tobit employed his perfume againſt the evil ſpirit. Perhaps you flatter yourſelf with the ſame good effect;—truſting that you at length may ſay with him: "Which "ſmell when the evil ſpirit had ſmelled, he fled into the "utmoſt parts of Egypt †." We indeed do not join in church-fellowſhip with other denominations. But what affinity has this to the peculiarities of Independents, who deny the right of a miniſter to diſpenſe ordinances to any but that particular congregation who called him? Is there any parallel between them, and a body whoſe miniſters officiate, as they have opportunity, in Britain, Ireland, and America, being conſidered as related, in their public character,

* Page 132. † Tob. viii. 3.

racter, to the church they are connected with in all its extent; nay, preach wherever they have a call, whether there be any of the people in communion with them or not; and where the members have a right to ſealing ordinances in every congregation, if regularly atteſted? With equal propriety, and with fully as much candour, might you ſay, that Independency is "the very quinteſſence of *Epiſcopacy* ſub-"limated and double refined;" becauſe, according to your own acknowledgement, "the miniſters of the Engliſh "Church" are ſo "cloſely reſtricted," and the laws of "your Epiſcopal Conſtitution" are ſo "rigid," as not to "allow the occaſional labours" of miniſters of other communions *.

Were I not afraid of extending too far, I might take notice of ſeveral miſtakes in point of fact, beſides thoſe formerly mentioned. You err in the very firſt of your obſervations; when you ſay, that "no diſſentients from the E-"ſtabliſhed Church were ever diſſentients from a Preſbyte-"rian government." You ſhould have known that Mr John Glaſs, miniſter of Tealing, was depoſed by the commiſſion of the General Aſſembly, 1730, becauſe of his Independent tenets; that he was the father of thoſe Independents, generally known by the name of *Glaſſites* in Scotland, and of *Sandemanians* in England: and that Meſſrs Smith and Ferrier, both miniſters of the Eſtabliſhed Church, left her communion, a conſiderable number of years afterwards, and formed another claſs of Independents, different from the former in a variety of articles. I might alſo mention the *Bereans*, the followers of Mr John Barclay, who are all Independents as to government.

When ſpeaking of the ſufferers in Scotland during the laſt perſecution, you ſay, that they "*impoſed* the Solemn League "and Covenant on the poſterity of thoſe who at firſt ſub-"ſcribed it †." Do you mean that they did ſo by compulſory meaſures? Thoſe who had taken arms before the battle of Pentland, renewed the covenants at Lanark, 26th November, 1666. But there is not a ſhadow of evidence that they

* Page 125. † Page 90.

they *impoſed* them on one individual. According to the hiſtory of theſe troublous times, none entered into theſe engagements but thoſe who were themſelves in arms; and who, it muſt be ſuppoſed, did ſo voluntarily.

BEFORE I take my leave of you, I ſhall make a few remarks on ITINERANT and LAY PREACHING. With reſpect to the former, I am far from being an enemy to the thing itſelf. Too little, I am afraid, has been done in this way by the Proteſtant churches. But every courſe of this kind ought to be well regulated. Miniſters of the Goſpel indeed belong to the church univerſal. But the duty of a *Paſtor* is certainly in a ſpecial manner owing to his own charge. He ought not to itinerate at the expence of this. Nor, as connected with a particular church, can he regularly officiate within the bounds of another charge belonging to it, without leave being aſked and given. If this rule be not obſerved, the greateſt ſchiſm and diſorder will ſpeedily be introduced. Although he ſhould be in a place where he has no particular connections, if the great doctrines of the goſpel be preached there already, and if he view other things as merely *circumſtantial;* it will be difficult to ſhew that he has a call to preach there, without a ſpecial invitation from the Paſtor. Even in this caſe, it is not the proper ſphere of his labours. Paul, who was not only a man "of an apoſtolic ſpirit," but a real apoſtle, diſcovered peculiar delicacy in this reſpect. "So have I ſtrived," he ſays, "to preach the goſpel, not where Chriſt was named, leſt I "ſhould build on another man's foundation *." To act otherwiſe cannot "promote brotherly love." For it is an intruſion on one whom the Itinerant muſt conſider as a brother, in all thoſe things in which eccleſiaſtical communion is concerned. It may be ſaid, that one coming to a place in the character of an Itinerant, coming from a diſtance, may attract hearers who do not ordinarily attend on a regular miniſtry, and thus that ſouls may be ſaved. I am bound to rejoice, and through grace I will rejoice, at the ſucceſs of all who publiſh the glad tidings of ſalvation, to whatever denomination

* Rom. xv. 20.

denomination they belong, and how irregular ſoever they may appear to me in ſome parts of their conduct. That Sovereign God, whom we ſerve, may bleſs means, where there is much diſorder and even impurity. But we are never warranted to ſay, "Let us do evil that good may "come *." "God is not the author of confuſion, but of "peace, as in all the churches of the ſaints †." The curioſity of individuals, who do not uſually attend on ordinances, may be excited by what is ſingular; and even this ſiniſter motive may be over-ruled for good. But is there not a riſk that more evil, than good, may be done? If an Itinerant intrudes on the charge of an evangelical miniſter, with whom he would have no ſcruple to hold communion, it will never "promote brotherly love" between the two. He may get ſome to hear him, who do not hear the other. But perhaps he is inſtrumental in ſubjecting a great many more to the curſe of "itching ears," in conſequence of which "they may turn away from the truth, and be turned un-"to fables ‡." It is his deſign to catch his hearers by "ſome new thing." They are ſo attracted by the novelty of the manner, or of the matter, eſpecially if ſerved up with a variety of anecdotes, both *moral and entertaining*, or ſomewhat of the *tragi-comic* kind, ſuch as in their hearing have never before enlivened that dull thing called a *ſermon;* that henceforth they have no reliſh for the tedious uniformity of their regular teachers. They can now be pleaſed with nothing that is not a little eccentric. They are much more *edified* by this kind of preaching, becauſe they are much more *amuſed*.

I ſhall only add, that *Itinerancy* in all ordinary caſes, ought to be in conſequence of a miſſion. He eſpecially, who has a fixed charge cannot leave it with propriety for any conſiderable time, unleſs he be ſent by thoſe whoſe authority he acknowledges. The *ſpirit* of Itinerancy cannot of itſelf conſtitute a ſufficient call. You ſay indeed; "If we are "not to have apoſtles, it is impoſſible that the church can "live, or be enlarged, unleſs we have men of an *apoſtolic* "*ſpirit*."

* Rom iii. 8. † 1 Cor. xiv. 33. ‡ 2 Tim. iv. 3, 4.

"*ſpirit* *." But even apoſtles ſubmitted to a particular miſſion from inferior officers. "The Holy Ghoſt ſaid to" the prophets and teachers at Antioch, "Separate me Bar-"nabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called "them †." If this was expedient with reſpect to extraordinary miniſters, much more as to thoſe who are ordinary. "An apoſtolic ſpirit" ſurely conſiſts not in breaking through ſcriptural rules. Where it is genuine, it will prove itſelf by the humility and regularity of a Saul and a Barnabas.

But you apprehend, that although we ſhould not have Apoſtles, we have ſtill Evangeliſts. For you reckon them among the "officers which ſtill exiſt, and muſt exiſt as long "as Chriſt has a church on the earth ‡." If you can prove this, Sir, you go a great way to ſupport your doctrine as to Itinerancy. But in this inſtance you differ from the general conſent of the church of Chriſt. Evangeliſts have uſually been reckoned among extraordinary officers. It has been viewed as an argument for this, that Timothy was appointed to this office, in conſequence of a ſpecial nomination by the Spirit of prophecy §. They ſeem to have been deſigned as co-adjutors to the Apoſtles, to attend and aſſiſt them in their labours; or to ſucceed them, by watering the churches they had planted. They were not fixed Paſtors; but called, according to the very nature of their office, to itinerate. They had powers ſuperior to thoſe of ordinary Paſtors and Teachers. For what properly belonged to the Apoſtles, and was left undone by them, they were to ſupply. This appears from what Paul ſays to Titus ‖. It is certain that, in ſome caſes at leaſt, their miſſion was atteſted by miraculous powers. This is evident from the account given of Philip, who was "one of the ſeven," and afterwards called to be an Evangeliſt ¶. They ſeem to have been directed, as to the line of their Itinerancy, by a more certain rule than we can now pretend to, either by the direction of inſpired men, or by the immediate and extraordinary

* Page 140. † Acts xiii. 2. ‡ Page 137. § 1 Tim. i. 18.
‖ Tit. i. 5. ¶ Acts viii. 6, 13. xxi. 8.

nary direction of the Spirit of God. Thus was Titus directed by the Apoſtle Paul *; and Timothy was ſent by him into Macedonia and other regions †. Philip was divinely directed to take that courſe in which he ſhould find the Ethiopian Eunuch, and afterwards commanded to "join "himſelf to his chariot ‡.

I cannot wonder, however, that you contend for the preſent exiſtence of Evangeliſts: for if I do not greatly miſtake your doctrine, the amount of it is, that all lawful miniſters, even in our own times, have an *extraordinary* call. For you ſay; "I do verily believe the *whole* work of ma-"king miniſters reſts with God alone. And while one "party affirm it is by the people's election, and another by "the power of ordination of Preſbyters or Biſhops, the "Lord will give his people to know that the Holy Ghoſt is "the only maker of every ſpiritual church officer; and that "ordination was *nothing* but an Apoſtolic inſtitution, giving "the right hand of fellowſhip to thoſe who were previouſly "ordained or ſent of God §." This is a very ſtrange aſſertion, directly tending to the total abolition of the ordinance of a goſpel-miniſtry. This ſeems to be the foundation you lay for the whole fabric of LAY-PREACHING. For after giving an account of the ſucceſs of ſome who had no regular call to the miniſtry, you add; "Now I humbly conceive "juſt in this way God raiſed his miniſters in primitive "times, that any one who had an ability might uſe it for "the inſtruction of others ‖." You endeavour to ſupport this aſſertion, by obſerving that the office mentioned in the ſixth of the Acts was quite remote from that of a preacher, as being appointed merely for temporal concerns; and that notwithſtanding two of thoſe who held it were "*preaching* "ſtewards." But although appointed ſtewards in the temporal concerns of the church, it will not follow that they never had any appointment to be "ſtewards of the myſteries of the "kingdom of God." The truth is, both the two referred to had extraordinary gifts; and it has never been denied,

 that

* Tit. iii. 12. † See Acts xix. 22. 1 Cor. iv. 17. 1 Theſſ. iii. 2.
‡ Acts viii. 26, 29. § Page 142. ‖ Page 151.

that thoſe whom the Head of the church thus endued, had a right to exerciſe theſe gifts according to their peculiar nature. I will not contend about the word *preaching*, although it is not uſed as to Stephen. Certain men, belonging to a particular ſynagogue, "aroſe,—diſputing with him." Had he been merely a private Chriſtian, he had an unqueſtionable right to reply. Such, however, was his anſwer, that they were determined to deſtroy him. You may call it a ſermon, if you will, that he delivered in the council. But ſtrictly ſpeaking it was merely his defence, in return to the accuſations brought by his adverſaries, and the queſtion of the high prieſt, "Are theſe things ſo?" But let any *deacon*, or private Chriſtian, give evidence of ſuch gifts as Stephen had; and he would be a bold man who would dare to prohibit him from preaching. For "Stephen, full of faith "and power, did great wonders and miracles among the "people*." Philip, we have already ſeen, was an Evangeliſt. At the time that he preached in Samaria, he was releaſed by divine authority from "ſerving tables" at Jeruſalem, and called to "a good degree." His call was atteſted by "the miracles which he did†."

The preaching of the word is the great ordinance of God for the ſalvation of men. But if it be an ordinance of God, we have a right to expect his bleſſing with it, only as obſerved according to his inſtitution. It will certainly be admitted, that none have a right to preach the goſpel, without a call of ſome kind or other. The only matter of diſpute will be, what it is that conſtitutes this. An extraordinary call is not now to be expected. What then may be neceſſary to conſtitute an ordinary one? Surely, there ſhould be reaſon to believe that the glory of God is propoſed as the ſupreme end. Beſides this, there ought alſo to be ſuch a meaſure of gifts as ſeems requiſite for edifying others. It is not, however, the mere poſſeſſion of ordinary gifts, that properly conſtitutes a call, but an authoritative miſſion. Here the queſtion naturally occurs, Who is to be the judge of theſe gifts? It muſt be ſuppoſed, either that Chriſt, the Lord

* Acts vi. 8. † Acts viii. 6, 13.

Lord of his church, has inveſted ſome with power to judge of the gifts neceſſary for the diſcharge of the miniſterial office; or that he has left it to every man with this view to judge of his own gifts. If the latter, it would ſeem that a door is left open for the greateſt confuſion in the church. If the former, this power of judging muſt reſide either with the whole church, or with her office-bearers.

Here it is not neceſſary to enter directly into the controverſy between Epiſcopalians and Preſbyterians, or between both and Independents. For according to the different models adopted by theſe churches, none have a right to preach, whoſe gifts are not tried and approved by *others;* whereas many in our time aſſert that there is no neceſſity for any ſuch judgment. To me it appears evident from ſcripture, that the power of trying the gifts, and of giving an authoritative miſſion, belongs to perſons themſelves inveſted with office in the church; and that, in ordinary caſes, none have a right to preach without ſuch a trial and miſſion.

"The higheſt ſatisfaction" has been expreſſed, "in ſta-"ting that ſome diſciples of the Lord Jeſus have no doubt "as to the obvious general application of our Saviour's "command, to go into all the world, and preach the goſpel "to every creature*." For my part, I cannot underſtand what is meant by this "obvious *general* application." Where is the warrant for it? The command itſelf, as recorded by the Spirit of inſpiration, can admit only of a *particular* application. It was not addreſſed to all the five hundred diſciples, of whom the Lord was ſeen before his aſcenſion, nor even to the hundred and twenty; but only to the eleven, whom he had formerly called to the work of the miniſtry. "The *eleven* diſciples went away into Gali-"lee, into a mountain where Jeſus had appointed them.—"And Jeſus came, and ſpake unto them, ſaying, All "power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye "therefore, and teach all nations, baptiſing them. &c.†." Here Jeſus addreſſes his diſciples as the Lord of his church.

* Miſſionary Magazine for July 1797.

† Matth. xxviii. 16, 18, 19.

To what purpoſe does he proclaim the gift of "all power" to himſelf, but to inform them that it was in conſequence of this univerſality of power committed to him as Mediator, that he ſent them, that he inveſted them with miniſterial power? It has been admitted by all who believe that the goſpel-miniſtry is a divine ordinance, that this language was not addreſſed to the eleven excluſively, or merely in their extraordinary character, but as miniſters of the goſpel; and that it muſt be viewed as extending to all their lawful ſucceſſors in the ordinary office of the miniſtry. If there be any "obvious general application of the command "to preach," why not alſo of the command to baptiſe? For both are included in one command. Every one, who by virtue of this precept hath a right to go and teach, muſt have an equal right to ſay, "Who can forbid water?" He who has a right to diſpenſe one ſeal of the covenant, muſt have an equal right to diſpenſe the other. Thus, according to "the obvious general application of the command," any man who thinks himſelf qualified, without any trial of his gifts, and without any miſſion, may not only preach but diſpenſe the ſacraments. What is the inference? That there is no neceſſity for ſetting any apart to the work of the miniſtry?

Well-meaning men may ſuppoſe, that zeal for the ſalvation of periſhing ſinners is a ſufficient apology for their preaching the goſpel without any regular call. But ſurely, they will not pretend that their zeal in this reſpect exceeds that of the great Apoſtle of the Gentiles. He ſpeaks, however, as if it were an impoſſibility that men ſhould preach without a miſſion. "How ſhall they preach, except "they be ſent?" It is as inconceivable to him, that any ſhould lawfully proclaim the glad tidings of ſalvation to others, in the character of miniſters of the word, without a miſſion, either of a mediate or immediate kind, as that men ſhould call on him in whom they have not believed, or believe in him of whom they have not heard, or hear without a preacher *. He ſays not, How ſhall they preach, except

* Rom. x. 14, 15.

cept they be *gifted?* but, "How ſhall they preach, except "they be *ſent?*" It has been imagined that theſe words excluſively refer to the Apoſtles, becauſe of their extraordinary miſſion. But nothing in the paſſage gives any ground for this limitation. When Paul afterwards ſays, with reſpect to the propagation of the goſpel; "Their ſound went "into all the earth *," it cannot be ſuppoſed that he confines his language to the Apoſtles. For we know that ſome parts of the world had previouſly been evangelized by means of others. Now it will not be ſaid, that thoſe who preached the word every where, in conſequence of the perſecution at Jeruſalem †, preached without being ſent. Beſides, the end of this preaching is *faith;* and if this depend on *hearing* as the great mean, hearing on *preaching*, and preaching on *miſſion;* if, at the ſame time, faith be neceſſary in every age of the church, miſſion muſt be alſo neceſſary.

The names, given in ſcripture to miniſters of the goſpel, plainly ſhew that none, in ordinary caſes, have a right to this office who have not ſuch a miſſion. They are called *biſhops* or *overſeers*. Now, no one can be intitled to the character of an overſeer, without an appointment from the ſuperior in whoſe work he is engaged. They are "*ſtewards* of the myſteries "of God ‡." But who can lawfully act as a ſteward in a family, without a call from the maſter? They are *angels* or *meſſengers*. To whom? To the people ſurely. And muſt they not receive this deſignation, as being *ſent* by Chriſt! They, to whom "the miniſtry of reconciliation is given," are *ambaſſadors* for Chriſt. But no one can juſtly ſuſtain the character of an ambaſſador, unleſs he be appointed by his ſovereign. To ſpeak of a ſelf created ambaſſador would be a contradiction in terms. The Apoſtle Paul deſcribes himſelf, and his fellow-labourers, even ſuch as were ordinary miniſters, as "allowed of God to be put in truſt," or "entruſted with the goſpel ||." But by whom are thoſe "put in truſt," who preach without any call?

Under the Old Teſtament, the Lord exerciſed the greateſt care with reſpect to thoſe who were entruſted with any ſacred

* Rom. x. 18. † Acts viii. 1. 4. ‡ 1 Cor. iv. 1. || 1 Theſſ. ii. 4.

cred office. The doctrine of thoſe who claimed a prophetical character, was to be tried by that revelation which God had already given *. No man might take the honour of prieſthood, "but he who was called of God, as was Aaron," and "ordained for men in things pertaining to God †." It is granted, that the prieſtly office in itſelf did not prefigure the miniſtry of the New Teſtament, but the character of our Lord Jeſus, as our true High Prieſt. But from the care exerciſed with reſpect to admiſſion into this office, we may ſafely infer that God hath not left the ſervice of the kingdom of heaven open to every one who may judge himſelf qualified; eſpecially as when ſpeaking, in prophetical language, of the appointment of goſpel-miniſters, he ſays; "I will take of them for Prieſts and for Levites ‡." In one reſpect, indeed, the legal Prieſts were forerunners of goſpel-miniſters. They were the ſtated teachers of the law to the people.

Timothy, as would ſeem, was an extraordinary miniſter. Yet he was ſet apart with the laying on of the hands of the Preſbytery. It may be ſaid, that this was only a ſign of the collation of thoſe extraordinary powers which diſtinguiſhed him as an Evangeliſt; as it is ſaid, "Neglect not the gift "that is in thee, which was given thee by," or "according to "prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the Preſby-"tery §." But it is highly probable that the word *gift* here denotes *office*; eſpecially as Paul ſays in the ſame epiſtle, "This charge I commit unto thee, ſon Timothy, ac-"cording to the prophecy which went before on thee ‖." From his alluſion to preceding prophecy concerning Timothy, it would appear that he uſes the word *charge* as conveying the ſame idea with *gift*. The latter ſeems to be uſed in the ſame ſenſe, Rom. xii. 6. For in what follows the Apoſtle explains *gifts* of *offices*. At any rate, if, in the paſſage referred to, the term *gift* ſignify qualification for an office, it muſt be remembered that this gift, and the laying on of the hands of the Preſbytery, are ſo connected, as to intimate

* Deut. xiii. 1. † Heb. v. 1, 4. ‡ Iſa. lxvi. 21. § 1 Tim. iv. 14.
‖ 1 Tim. i. 18.

intimate that Timothy received the one by means of the other.

Paul and Barnabas were already extraordinary miniſters of Chriſt. Yet when called to a ſpecial miſſion, the ſame ſolemnity was uſed *. For what reaſon, but to ſhew that none may run except they be ſent? If this was enjoined by the Spirit of God, with reſpect to thoſe who were already miniſters, nay, inveſted with an extraordinary character; it certainly affords an argument *a fortiori*, in proof of this as the eſtabliſhed order of the church of Chriſt.

Timothy is commanded by Paul, to "commit the things "which he had heard of him to faithful men, who ſhould "be able to teach others alſo †. They were firſt to be tried, whether they were "apt to teach." Then was the goſpel to be ſolemnly *committed* to them, that they might inſtruct others.

It is evident from the ſixth chapter of the Acts, that it is not the poſſeſſion of ſuch gifts as may be ſuppoſed neceſſary to qualify for the proper diſcharge of an office, although the loweſt in the church, but an ordination to this office, that conſtitutes a right to exerciſe it. The perſons choſen to take care of the temporal concerns of the church, were previouſly "full of faith, of the Holy Ghoſt, and of wiſdom ‡;" but they could do nothing in a public character, till they were "appointed over this buſineſs," by prayer and impoſition of hands §. When Paul enjoins Titus to "ordain el-"ders in every city," he requires that thoſe entruſted with this character, ſhould be generally known as "holding faſt "the faithful word," and as "able by ſound doctrine both "to exhort and to convince the gain-ſayers ‖." Yet their right to exhort and teach was not founded on their gifts, but on their ſolemn call by ordination to the exerciſe of theſe.

It has been ſuppoſed that Acts viii. 1, 4. affords a ſtrong argument for Lay-preaching: "At that time, there was a "great perſecution againſt the church which was at Jeruſa-"lem; and they were all ſcattered abroad through the re-"gions

* Acts xiii. 3. † 2 Tim. ii. 2. ‡ Acts vi. 3, 5. § Ver. 3, 6.
‖ Tit. i. 5, 9.

" gions of Judea and Samaria, except the apoſtles.—Therefore " they that were ſcattered abroad went every where preach- " ing the word." Hence it has been urged, that "not delega- " ted preachers, but the church in general, proclaimed to " their fellow-ſinners the goſpel of the Lord Jeſus." Although this view of the paſſage were juſt, it would afford no argument as to what ſhould be done in ordinary times. Things may be lawful and neceſſary, when the church is in a ſcattered ſtate, which would be quite unwarrantable were ſhe ſettled. There is no evidence, however, that the diſciples in this inſtance deviated from the ordinary plan. Were this paſſage literally interpreted, it would follow that the Apoſtles remained at Jeruſalem, without having any church to which they could miniſter. For it is ſaid that " *all* were ſcattered abroad, except the apoſtles." But it will undoubtedly be ſuppoſed that the term *all*, as in many other places, is here to be underſtood in a limited ſenſe. If it be ſaid, that only a great part of the members of the church of Jeruſalem is meant, and that all ſuch preached the word; another abſurdity muſt neceſſarily follow;—that women preached the word as well as men. For, as we learn from ver. 3, the perſecution was carried on againſt both ſexes indiſcriminately. It will naturally be ſuppoſed, that women fled from it as well as men; and that, being " ſcattered abroad," they " went preaching every where." If it be true, that " the church in general proclaimed the " goſpel," it will be impoſſible to ſhew that it was not preached by women; unleſs it can be proved that women were not in theſe days conſidered as church-members.

If one plead that the expreſſion muſt be limited in one way, I have certainly an equal right to plead that it ſhould be limited in another, unleſs it can be proved that this is contrary to the ſenſe of the context or the general tenor of ſcripture. But the limitation of this language to the ordinary teachers is favoured by a concurrence of circumſtances. The very mention that is made of the *apoſtles*, naturally ſuggeſts this idea. Why are they alone mentioned, when we are certain that many others remained at Jeruſalem; if

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it be not to inform us that they were the only *miniſters* of the word who remained there*? It is not ſaid of thoſe who were ſcattered, that they went *teaching*, but that they "went preaching the word." Now, no other paſſage can be produced, where this phraſe is uſed with reſpect to any who were not in office.

The context merits particular attention. Stephen, a man of extraordinary gifts, is mentioned immediately before: and when it is ſaid that "they who were ſcattered abroad, "went every where preaching the word," the inſpired writer inſtantly adds; "Then Philip went down to the city "of Samaria, and preached Chriſt unto them †." Is it not moſt natural to conclude, that they who "went every where "preaching the word," were perſons entruſted with official character as Philip was? It is particularly narrated, that they were ſcattered abroad "through Samaria." But Philip is the only diſciple who is mentioned as having gone thither, or as preaching there: "And the people with one ac-"cord gave heed unto thoſe things which *Philip* ſpake ‡." All the bleſſed effects of the preaching of the goſpel are inſtrumentally aſcribed to him: "They believed Philip "preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God §." Simon continued with Philip ||. Is there here any reaſon for ſuppoſing that he had any private Chriſtians aſſociated with him in the work of the miniſtry? Or muſt we conclude that the inſpired writer had ſuch an "idea of miniſ-"terial importance," as not to take any notice of Preachers who were "found promiſcuouſly among all ſorts of cha-"racters ¶?"

 Beſides,

* It has been obſerved that the particle πλην, here rendered *except*, as uſed with the Genitive, in the New Teſtament, invariably ſignifies that there is no exception but of the perſon or thing particularly ſpecified. See Mark xii. 32. John viii. 10. Acts xv. 28. xxvii. 22. It muſt therefore be meant, either that the *apoſtles* were the only perſons belonging to the church, who continued at Jeruſalem, or that they were the only perſons of one deſcription, that is, inveſted with the character of public teachers.

† Ver. 5. ‡ Ver. 6. § Ver. 12. || Ver. 13.

¶ Page 156.

Beſides, it is evident that all who were thus evangelized, were alſo baptiſed, both men and women *. Did "the "church in general" baptiſe, as well as preach? Or did they retain the Evangeliſt Philip among them, that he might baptiſe thoſe of whom they had made diſciples? It may be added, that Doctors Gill and Guyſe, although both Independents, were fully convinced that the *all* here meant were the ordinary preachers.

Reference has been made to Acts xi. 19, 20. "Some of "them," who were ſcattered abroad, "were men of Cyprus "and Cyrene." It is highly probable that one of theſe was Lucius of Cyrene, who is numbered among the "prophets "and teachers" of the church of Antioch, chap. xiii. 1. Indeed, as thoſe who were ſcattered by that perſecution went as far as Antioch †, it would ſeem that the moſt of theſe prophets and teachers were among them, and that they had ſtill continued there.

An argument has been founded on the language of the Apoſtle Peter, firſt epiſtle iv. 10, 11. "As every man hath "received the gift, even ſo miniſter the ſame one to ano-"ther, as good ſtewards of the manifold grace of God. If "any man ſpeak, *let him ſpeak* as the oracles of God; if any "man miniſter, let him do it as of the ability which God "giveth." That the talent which God has given muſt by no means be laid up in a napkin, is the very doctrine which the Apoſtle enforces. But there is no certain proof that *ſpeaking* is here meant of preaching. It may reſpect that private inſtruction or exhortation, which is competent to all Chriſtians. If *miniſtring* be underſtood of that duty of liberality which is incumbent on all, according to their ability; it is moſt natural to underſtand the *ſpeaking* here mentioned in a ſimilar ſenſe. If it be urged that public ſpeaking is meant, I contend that there is as good reaſon to render the term *miniſter*, "act the part of a Deacon." But this implies an office. For the ſame word occurs, Rom. xii. 7. where it is evidently uſed in contradiſtinction from other kinds of miniſtry. Now, if an office be neceſſary for the inferior

* Ver. 12. † Acts xi. 19

inferior work, much more for the ſuperior. It will, indeed, be difficult to prove that the word, here rendered *gift*, does not expreſsly ſignify an office. I here abſtract, Sir, from what you have ſaid in a long note on the office of *Deacon;* becauſe I do not underſtand it. If it mean any thing, it ſeems to mean that, becauſe a word is ſometimes uſed in ſcripture in a more general ſenſe, it muſt therefore, on no occaſion, however ſtrictly defined by the context, be underſtood more particularly. By the ſame ſort of reaſoning, becauſe the term *elder* in one place* ſimply denotes an aged perſon, it is never to be underſtood of an official character, or muſt at any rate ſignify that none may be inveſted with it except they be *old.*

Great ſtreſs has been laid on the example of Apollos, Acts xviii. 24,—28. Let it be ſuppoſed that he bore no office in the church before he came to Epheſus. Yet it muſt be remembered that the Jewiſh ſynagogue had peculiar cuſtoms, which form no pattern for the Chriſtian church. We learn from Jewiſh writers, that in their ſynagogues there were principal ſeats, in which the ſcribes or teachers ſat, and that if any ſtranger ſeated himſelf there, it was inferred that he was a public teacher; and he was accordingly invited to exhort the audience. This accounts for the invitation given to Paul and Barnabas†. Now, there is no evidence that Apollos, while at Epheſus, taught any where but in the ſynagogue. It would appear that it was not till he "paſſed into Achaia," that he watered the church, or publicly addreſſed himſelf to thoſe who had "believed "through grace."

It may be ſaid, that, "when he was diſpoſed to paſs into "Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the diſciples to re-"ceive him;" and that there is no evidence from the paſſage that he had any other call to preach in Achaia, than he had when he came to Epheſus. It has indeed been aſſerted, that "he paſſed over to Achaia to preach, becauſe "he was *ſo diſpoſed.*" But this is not a fair inference from the language of the inſpired hiſtorian. It is an obvious

 fallacy

* 1 Tim. v. 1. † Acts xiii. 15.

fallacy. An important link is left out. The inclination of Apollos to go into Achaia, and his paſſing thither to preach, are not immediately connected. For in the verſe a double connexion is ſtated; firſt, between his inclination and the recommendation of the brethren; and then, between his actually paſſing into Achaia and his ſucceſs in preaching there. He did not "paſs into Achaia to preach there," merely "becauſe he was *ſo diſpoſed*." But becauſe he was diſpoſed to go thither, "the brethren wrote, exhorting the "diſciples to receive him." There is no evidence that he would have viſited the churches of Achaia, without a recommendation of this kind. Now, it is highly probable that the brethren here referred to were the elders of the church of Epheſus; eſpecially as there is ſuch a change of the term, as ſeems to denote that a diſtinction is ſtated between them and the church-members in general to whom they wrote: "The *brethren* wrote, exhorting the *diſciples*." If this be the proper ſenſe of the term, we have here the eſſentials of a miſſion. The overſeers at Epheſus recommended Apollos to other churches, becauſe they approved of his gifts, in conſequence of ſuch a trial as ſeemed to them ſufficient. But although it ſhould be ſuppoſed, that by the *brethren* we are to underſtand the members of the church of Epheſus in general; the paſſage would afford as little room for pleading that men may go about and preach without any trial. For according to this view, Apollos had a recommendation from the whole community of the faithful at Epheſus, who had made trial of his gifts. From this commendatory epiſtle it is evident at any rate, that the brethren there had no idea that the churches of Achaia would be willing to *receive* any ſelf-ſent Miſſionaries, if I may uſe ſuch a phraſe, or ſuch as pretended to preach without any other atteſtation than the good opinion they had of their own gifts.

But I may reaſon ſtill on another ground. Apollos was a miniſter of Chriſt, as much as Paul or Cephas *, who were both expreſsly called to this work. He was acknowledged

* 1 Cor. i. 12. iii. 5, 22.

ledged as ſuch while at Corinth, whither he went from Epheſus *. The Corinthian believers were among the diſciples to whom he was recommended. He muſt have been either an extraordinary or an ordinary miniſter. If the former, his call would appear by extraordinary gifts. In this caſe, it might not be thought neceſſary formally to ordain him. It is moſt probable, indeed, that he was an Evangeliſt. For his miniſtry is expreſſed by the term *watering* †, which is generally underſtood as eſpecially referring to the work of an Evangeliſt. And it is clear that he was not a fixed paſtor. Some indeed have ſuppoſed that he had apoſtolical powers. He might have been received by the church of Epheſus, in conſequence of the *ſigns* of an extraordinary miſſion. If he was an ordinary miniſter, he muſt have been ordained at ſome time or other. It is incumbent on thoſe who plead his example as a warrant for preaching without any regular call, to ſhew that when he *watered* the church of Corinth, he was not ordained, or inveſted with any official character.

"Mere ſuppoſition," it has been ſaid, "in a caſe of this "kind goes for nothing." But it is not mere ſuppoſition that Apollos was, in the moſt ſtrict ſenſe of the term, a miniſter; for he is ſo deſigned by the Spirit of inſpiration. He was, no leſs than Paul, "a miniſter of Chriſt, and ſtew-"ard of the myſteries of God ‡." He is not merely called διακονος, but υπηρετης, a perſon in office under Chriſt. For the ſame word is invariably uſed, in the New Teſtament, to denote the *officers* employed by thoſe inveſted with authority §. He is alſo called a *ſteward;* a deſignation which properly implies the formal collation of truſt, whatever be its peculiar nature. Thus it denotes the ſteward of a family ‖, the tutor appointed to minors ¶, and the chamberlain of a city ††. Is the *ſteward* in the family of Chriſt, the *tutor* of the heirs of glory, the *chamberlain* in the city of the living God,

* Acts xix. 1. † 1 Cor. iii 6. ‡ 1 Cor. iv. 1. 6.
§ See John v. 32, 46. xviii. 3, 12, 22. xix. 6. Acts v. 22, 26.
‖ Luke xvi. 8. 1 Cor. iv. 2. ¶ Gal. iv. 2. †† Rom. xvi. 23.

God, the only perſon who needs no particular call, no expreſs appointment to his work?

Although in the compendious hiſtory of the Acts, no particular account is given of the extraordinary miſſion, or of the ordination of Apollos, it will by no means follow that he run without being ſent. With equal reaſon might it be urged that Titus and many others, who are expreſsly mentioned in the New Teſtament, as miniſters, were never ſent in an extraordinary way, or were never ordained as ordinary miniſters, becauſe of the ſilence of ſcripture on this head. We have already ſeen that, when he paſſed into Achaia, he had better credentials than many in our day can produce, who claim a right to *plant* or to *water*.

It has been ſaid, that the qualifications of Apollos as "an "eloquent man, mighty in the ſcriptures, and fervent in "ſpirit," are the only cauſes aſſigned why he "ſpake and "taught diligently the things of the Lord." But if the paſſage be read with deliberation, it will appear that his *ſpeaking* and *teaching* are immediately connected with no other circumſtance than that of his being "fervent in ſpi-"rit." Nor is his fervency given as the reaſon of his ſpeaking and teaching, but of his doing ſo *diligently*. Surely, the inſpired hiſtorian did not believe that eloquence, or acquaintance with the ſcriptures, or fervency, or all theſe taken together, formed a ſufficient warrant for preaching in the caſe of Apollos: for he mentions a very different ground in another caſe. "Judas and Silas, *being prophets alſo them-"ſelves*, exhorted the brethren with many words, and con-"firmed them *."

The Apoſtle Paul, Phil. i. 14. ſays; "Many of the bre-"thren in the Lord waxing confident by my bonds, are "much more bold to ſpeak the word without fear." But no good argument can be derived from this paſſage. Any unprejudiced reader would underſtand this language, as implying that the perſons referred to had formerly been preachers, and that contrary to all human expectation, ſo far from being overpowered by fear for themſelves, by reaſon of

* Acts xv. 32.

of Paul's ſufferings, they, in conſequence of obſerving his ſucceſs and the divine ſupport given to him, had become much more bold in the diſcharge of their miniſtry, than they were before he appeared at Rome as a priſoner. Theſe expreſſions, " waxing confident," and " more abundantly da-" ring without fear to ſpeak the word," neceſſarily imply that they had formerly ſpoken it, although with an inferior degree of fortitude. The expreſſion *brethren* muſt, in many places, be underſtood of Chriſtians in general. But here it ſeems to be confined to miniſters. Some indeed, on this occaſion, " preached Chriſt of envy and ſtrife," and " not " ſincerely." But their intentions make nothing to the argument. Nor is it certain that theſe were among the perſons whom Paul had acknowledged as " brethren in the " Lord." The term *brethren* muſt, in a variety of paſſages, be underſtood as limited to miniſters *. In this limited ſenſe Paul, in this very epiſtle, calls Epaphroditus his brother †, and in the cloſe of it, *the brethren* are diſtinguiſhed from *all the ſaints* ‡.

A plea for Lay-preaching has been derived from Heb. x. 25. " Not forſaking the aſſembling of ourſelves together, " as the manner of ſome is; but exhorting one another." It has been argued by ſome learned interpreters, that the term rendered " aſſembling together" does not properly refer to aſſembling in public, but to the private intercourſe of a religious kind that ought to ſubſiſt among Chriſtians, and the various demonſtrations of brotherly love incumbent on them; according to the injunction contained in the preceding verſe. But even ſuppoſing that it relates only to the public aſſemblies of the church, it affords no evidence that the primitive Chriſtians thus met together for mutual exhortation. Viewed in connection with the preceding verſe, the meaning evidently is, that ſo far from " forſaking the aſ-" ſembling of themſelves together," Chriſtians ſhould " pro-" voke one another," to this " good work;" or comfort and encourage,

* See 2 Cor. viii. 23. 1 Theſſ iii. 2. † Chap. ii. 25.
‡ Chap. iv. 21, 22.

encourage, as the word rendered *exhort* frequently ſignifies, to a regular attendance on public ordinances.

The oppoſition is ſtated between *not forſaking* and *exhorting*. Now, as the firſt is the duty of all church-members without exception, the ſecond muſt be ſomething of the ſame kind. But it will not be ſaid that all church-members are called to exhort in public; whereas all may privately exhort, according to their ſtations and opportunities. It is the duty of all, whether male or female, to do ſo. Had it been ſimply ſaid, "Aſſembling ourſelves together, and exhorting," there might have been more reaſon to plead that they were to aſſemble for public exhortation. But as the expreſſion is, "*Not forſaking* the aſſembling of ourſelves," the other branch of the antitheſis immediately reſpects the "not forſaking." The language expreſſes not what was to be done when they were aſſembled in public, but what they were privately to do in order to prevent one another from *leaving off* to aſſemble in this manner. They were to exhort one another, not to forſake this aſſembling of themſelves together.

It is rather ſtrange to aſk; "Who ſent forth Luther and "Calvin and other great men to preach the goſpel?" It has been generally admitted by Proteſtants, that the corruptions of the church of Rome did not invalidate the ordinances diſpenſed in her communion, in as far as theſe were originally of divine authority, and the eſſentials were ſtill retained; becauſe, how impure ſoever the channel, God was their primary author. Nor could a ſentence of excommunication deprive thoſe, on whom it was unjuſtly paſſed, of powers which rightfully belonged to them; for in this caſe it did not bind in heaven. But let it be ſuppoſed, that the Reformers had no authority to preach by virtue of any former ordination; if ever men, without miraculous atteſtation, had a call to diſpenſe all ordinances, although not ordained, they certainly had it. "Neceſſity can, in no "inſtance, render lawful a thing which is abſolutely un-"lawful." But the unlawfulneſs of an action frequently depends on circumſtances. This holds eſpecially with reſpect

ſpect to poſitive inſtitutions. It was unlawful for any, in ordinary caſes, to eat of the ſhew-bread but the prieſts. Neceſſity, however, rendered it lawful for David. The ordinance of the miniſtry is of a ſimilar nature.

But is the preſent caſe parallel to that of Luther and Calvin? Suppoſing that the ordination received in the church of Rome was invalid, was there any other church to which they could apply? Was not all the world antichriſtian? Have thoſe who contend for Lay-preaching any ſuch plea in our time? Can they conſiſtently deny the validity of ordination in any church, in which they ſcruple not to receive the ſeals of the covenant?

The preſent caſe is by no means parallel in another reſpect. In many inſtances, the Reformers had the ſolemn and urgent call of a people, who had no other means of receiving the bread of life. That eminent ſervant of God, John Knox, at firſt "utterly refuſed" to liſten to the earneſt intreaties of John Roughe preacher, who wiſhed him to enter on public work, becauſe he was himſelf "oppreſſed "by the multitude of labours." He alledged, "That he "wald not rin quhair God had not callit him." And it was only after he had been publicly charged, by the ſaid Mr Roughe, in the name of God, and of his Son Jeſus Chriſt, and of the whole congregation, to take on him the "office and charge of preaching," that he complied, as himſelf declares, with "greif and trobill of hairt *."

Is it aſked, what are private Chriſtians to do, who are animated with ardent love to periſhing ſouls, when theſe are neglected by others who are in office? They may do many things conſiſtent with that ſtation which God has given them. They may, and ought to "plead with their mo-"ther." If ſhe reſiſt all their pleadings, they may apply to ſome religious ſociety, in which the goſpel is preached, repreſenting the afflicted ſituation of periſhing ſinners. They may contribute of their ſubſtance for ſending the goſpel to them in a regular way. They may, as they have opportunity, privately exhort them as to the miniſters they

* Knox's hiſt. Book I. page 67, 68, fol. edit.

ſhould hear. Above all, they ſhould not forget that exhortation given to the diſciples, before they were themſelves regularly called to enter on public work,—given by him, who, "ſeeing the multitude, had compaſſion on them, be-"cauſe they fainted, and were ſcattered abroad, as ſheep "having no ſhepherd."—This is his exhortation; "Pray "ye the Lord of the harveſt, that he will ſend forth la-"bourers into his harveſt*." Although no human compaſſion towards periſhing ſouls can equal his, he gives no encouragement to his diſciples to take any irregular courſe. He calls them to wait God's time, and to keep his way, and to do ſo in the exerciſe of prayer.

Scriptural zeal is conſiſtent in its operations. When properly exerciſed with reſpect to the ſalvation of ſinners, it will not trample on the inſtitutions of the Saviour. When he has ſouls to gather in, he will "ſend forth labourers," according to the rule of his word. If zeal for the ſalvation of others be of itſelf a ſufficient call to the work of the miniſtry, or a valid reaſon for neglecting ſcriptural order; I do not ſee that the twelve were juſtifiable in not preaching to the Gentiles, or to the Samaritans, during their firſt miſſion. Jeſus had ſaid, "Go not into the way of the "Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye "not†." But they might ſay; "Are not the ſouls of "Gentiles and Samaritans as precious as thoſe of Jews? "We muſt paſs their very doors, and ſhall we not publiſh "to them the glad tidings of ſalvation? How many of them "may periſh, before we have another ſuch opportunity?" But the diſciples muſt refrain from preaching to theſe people, becauſe they were not *ſent to them*. And can mere zeal for the ſalvation of others authorize men to preach, who are not *ſent* at all? The want of ſuch a miſſion as Chriſt requires in his word is, in ordinary caſes, equivalent to an expreſs prohibition.

To every unprejudiced perſon it muſt be obvious that the plan of lay-preaching tends to introduce the greateſt diſorder in the church of Chriſt. If any one man has a right

* Matth. ix. 36, 38. † Matth. x. 5.

right to judge of his own gifts, and to enter on the miniſtry becauſe of a favourable judgment, every other muſt have the ſame. Thus, the want of an auditory will be the only ſafeguard againſt the moſt ignorant or erroneous perſon, who may preſume to become a preacher. And ſuch is the temper of our times, that it may be feared, preachers of this deſcription, if poſſeſſed of any conſiderable ſhare of abilities, might be more acceptable, in many places at leaſt, than the friends of evangelical doctrine. It is to be lamented, indeed, that many are licenſed and ordained, who are not qualified. But this is not the caſe in all the religious ſocieties in this country. And if lay-preaching produce the effects it has formerly done, the evil will be increaſed, inſtead of being remedied. It is well known to what an height this practice was carried in Cromwell's army. According to the teſtimony of an Independent, "the officers ſet up for "preachers in their ſeveral regiments, depending upon a "kind of miraculous aſſiſtance of the divine Spirit, without "any ſtudy or preparation; and when their imaginations "were heated, they gave vent to the moſt crude and undi-"geſted abſurdities. Nor did the evil reſt there; for from "preaching at the head of their regiments, they took poſ-"ſeſſion of the country pulpits where they were quartered, "till at length they ſpread the infection over the whole na-"tion, and brought the regular miniſtry into contempt. "Moſt of the common ſoldiers were religious and orderly,— "but for want of prudent and regular inſtruction, were "ſwallowed up in the depths of enthuſiaſm."——"The "Independents," he elſewhere ſays, "who were leſs zealous "about clerical order, encouraged, or at leaſt connived at "the Lay-preachers; apprehending that, in caſes of neceſ-"ſity, pious men of good natural parts might exerciſe their "gifts publicly to the edification of the church; till under "this cover they ſaw every bold enthuſiaſt almoſt begin to "uſurp the office of a teacher*." I may venture to aſſert that theſe diſorders tended to bring the doctrine of grace, and particularly of the Spirit's gracious operation, under an

 obloquy

* Neal's hiſt. of the Puritans, Vol. III. chap. vi. and ix.

obloquy in our neighbouring country, from which it has never ſince recovered. It merits particular attention, and eſpecially from all who profeſs to be the friends of Chriſt, that he inſtituted a regular miniſtry, expreſsly as a preſervative againſt thoſe diſorders to which his church would otherwiſe have been far more ſubject. "He gave ſome, "apoſtles; and ſome, prophets; and ſome, evangeliſts; and "ſome, paſtors and teachers:—that we henceforth be no "more children, toſſed to and fro, and carried about with "every wind of doctrine, and cunning craftineſs whereby "they lie in wait to deceive *."

You, Sir, endeavour to meet this objection, by obſerving that "it is no argument againſt the uſe of any thing, that "it is liable to abuſe †." This is undoubtedly true, when the thing itſelf is lawful. But the lawfulneſs of this practice, in ordinary caſes, is denied. Its liableneſs to abuſe is therefore urged only as an additional argument againſt it: and indeed, although we had no direct argument, this of itſelf would afford a very ſtrong preſumption; becauſe it ſeems inconſiſtent with the wiſdom of the Head of the Church, to leave the miniſtry of the goſpel open to "all "who paſs by the way," and thus to expoſe his vineyard to every ſpecies of devaſtation. The beſt things may be abuſed. But there is a great difference between a thing, good in itſelf, being liable to abuſe from the weakneſs or wickedneſs of man; and another, which from its very nature neceſſarily tends to this. Nor is this practice merely "liable to a-"buſe." The very uſe of it is abuſe; becauſe it is directly contrary to divine inſtitution.

That matters are very improperly conducted in Univerſities, and in many "faſhionable diſſenting Academies," I am by no means diſpoſed to deny. It is matter of deep regret, that, in our day, there are proofs without number, that preaching is made a trade; and that many lie under the curſe pronounced againſt the houſe of Eli, that every one who was left in it ſhould "come and crouch for a piece of "ſilver, and for a morſel of bread, ſaying, Put me, I pray "thee,

* Eph. iv. 11, 14. † Page 156.

" thee, into one of the prieſt's offices, that I may eat a piece " of bread." But we are not therefore to ruſh to another extreme, leſt the cure prove worſe than the diſeaſe. Becauſe many are admitted into the office of the miniſtry, who are very unfit for it, we are not hence to conclude that the proper plan is to throw it open to every one who thinks himſelf qualified. Becauſe, in many ſeminaries of learning, little or no attention is paid to the proper plan of education; we have no reaſon to aſſert, that men will be better miniſters who have no education at all. This would indeed be to argue againſt the uſe of a thing lawful and proper, from the abuſe of it. There are certainly other remedies of a more eligible nature. Thoſe, who are diſſatisfied with the plan of education at Univerſities, or in ſome Academies, are not therefore reduced to the neceſſity of treating human learning with contempt. They can attend at other Academies. Or, if all are objectionable, let new ones be inſtituted by thoſe who have it in their power, and who, at the ſame time, are friends to the goſpel.

But however far ſome carry their oppoſition to human learning, you declare that you " ſtrongly plead for the ex- " iſtence" of Univerſities and Academies, while you " la- " ment their perverſion from the purity and ſimplicity of " the goſpel *." With you, I am fully convinced, that none ſhould be encouraged to proceed in theological ſtudies, who have not proved in ſome degree " that they have both " gifts and grace for the work." None are admitted by Seceders to the ſtudy of divinity, without a ſtrict examination either by a Preſbytery, or by a Committee of Synod appointed for this purpoſe. Human learning is certainly neceſſary, in ordinary circumſtances, as a ſubordinate qualification for the miniſtry. As the enemies of our holy religion, or of its fundamental doctrines, employ this as an offenſive weapon, it is proper that its friends ſhould be able to meet them on their own ground. How can a man, who is an entire ſtranger to critical learning, acquit himſelf with any propriety in combating the falſe criticiſms of adverſaries on the ſacred

* Pages 158 159.

ſacred text? Or can he do ſo with judgment, if unacquainted with the original languages? Muſt he not, in this caſe, take the advantage of that learning in others, which he inconſiſtently denies to be neceſſary in himſelf? I will not affirm that philoſophy is entirely of the ſame uſe. But certainly, philoſophical ſtudies accuſtom a man to think with cloſeneſs, and to reaſon with accuracy. While I plead for human learning, however, as uſeful in its own place, I am far from thinking that any church ſhould in this reſpect bind herſelf by rules that admit of no exception; or that ſhe ſhould refuſe office to a man, whatever be his qualifications, merely becauſe he has not ſtudied within certain walls, or for a certain time.

Yet you ſeem to think that "this liberty" of Lay-preaching, which you ſay is "allowed by the word of God," is "leſs liable to abuſe" than the regular method. You aſſign this reaſon: "They who take up religion as a matter "of choice, are more likely to be ſincere, than others who "take it up as a matter of mere profeſſion. Such, there-"fore, as preſume to ſerve them, are ſure to be more nar-"rowly watched, and are leſs under the temptation to "mercenary deſigns *." As far as I can apprehend the force of this argument, it implies that thoſe only can be viewed as "taking up religion as a matter of choice," who are *ſerved* by Lay-preachers, or by thoſe at leaſt who have had no regular education. It is a mournful truth, that "many a baſe hypocrite is kept in office by the payment "he receives." Others, "by their private fortunes or ſe-"cular employments, have manifeſted a noble diſintereſted-"neſs of Spirit." But men may be "leſs under temptation "to mercenary deſigns," while the church is not leſs expoſed to danger from other ſiniſter motives. They may be heady, deſirous of the admiration of the multitude, and eager to form a party; while even their apparent diſintereſtedneſs may only prove the greater ſnare, if they be, as you expreſs it, "of a bad deſcription." Your obſervations can apply with propriety to thoſe only whoſe ſupport depends not

*Page 157.

not on their congregations; and therefore are not altogether conſiſtent with what you have formerly advanced as to the chief magiſtrate "taking that body of Chriſtians under his "more immediate cognizance and *ſupport*," whoſe "forms "and modes reſpecting Chriſtianity he may think prefer-"able to others *."

It may even be conceived that ſome may be as much under the influence of "mercenary deſigns" in refuſing a ſalary, as others can be in accepting of it. It is underſtood that thoſe who receive a ſalary devote themſelves wholly to the work of the miniſtry. Now on theſe terms, many who wiſh to appear in public character, would find themſelves great loſers, did they give up with their "ſecular employments." I ſay nothing of the livings of the church of England. But in this country, and eſpecially among diſſenters, they muſt be very great fools who ſeek to make "a trade of preaching;" for the generality of conſiderable tradeſmen, whether they "be preaching tradeſmen" or not, would not exchange ſituations with them in a temporal reſpect.

This argument in favour of Lay-preaching is objectionable in another point of view. It virtually impugns the wiſdom of the Head of the church. For "even ſo hath the "Lord ordained, that they who preach the goſpel, ſhould "live of the goſpel †." If thoſe who have "private for-"tunes," chooſe not to be burdenſome to others, who can blame them? The diſintereſtedneſs they have it in their power to diſplay, is worthy of praiſe. But this is no argument for the conduct of others, who have no ſuch ability. The rule, that Chriſt hath given, is adapted to the ſituation of by far the greateſt part of thoſe whom he calls to ſerve him in the goſpel. Paul indeed laboured with his own hands, becauſe he thought it more expedient to do ſo, in the circumſtances of the church in that age. But he at the ſame time aſſerted his "power over" Chriſtians, his right to claim a ſubſiſtence. He had a reaſon for diſpenſing with this power, that ordinary miniſters have not. He had extraordinary gifts, and had therefore no occaſion for ſtudy.

You

* Page 102. † 1 Cor. ix. 14.

You mention two evils as "the natural result of thus "*making up* men for the miniſtry." Of the firſt of theſe you give the following account: "Many may be educated to a "belief of the doctrines of grace, without being converted "to God by the grace of thoſe doctrines. Theſe undergo "a ſort of *pſeudo-ſpiritual* manufactory. They are taught "to *make* prayers and ſermons according to what is called "an orthodox plan, while the ſpirit and temper of the man "renders him a dead weight on the cauſe *." That many are educated in ſound doctrines who never feel their power, is a truth atteſted by the mournful experience of the church in every age. But will it hence follow, that all who preach the doctrines of grace, without any regular education for the miniſtry, are genuine converts? Is it not juſt as poſſible for men to *ſet up* as preachers from mere enthuſiaſm, as to be *made up* merely by the force of education? It may well be queſtioned, if there be not more danger that illiterate men, as "ſtone-maſons, butchers, weavers, taylors, ſhop-"keepers, and ſhoe-makers †," may be hurried away by the influence of enthuſiaſm, ſo as to become preachers of doctrines to the gracious power of which they are ſtrangers; than that others ſhould do ſo who have long and deliberately conſidered them, had time to weigh the oppoſite objections, and have alſo foreſeen the contempt to which they muſt be expoſed from their former aſſociates in human learning, in conſequence of appearing as advocates for ſuch doctrines. According to your plan too, there is reaſon to ſuſpect that very little reſpect will be paid to that old precept; "Not a novice, leſt being *lifted up* ‡."——You know what follows. Thus, all the danger does not lie on the ſide of thoſe who are *made up*. The evil you refer to is no more "the natural reſult" of regular education, than, to uſe the language of ſome philoſophers, of that ſpontaneous generation for which you plead.

Beſides, the gifts of thoſe who are regularly educated, are tried before they are allowed to appear as inſtructors of others. Miniſters or Preſbyteries cannot know the hearts of men,

* Page 160. † Page 148. ‡ 1 Tim. iii. 6.

men, but as little can their hearers. Do ſome Miniſters act as judges, who are very unfit for the work? And do none in the character of private Chriſtians labour under a ſimilar indiſpoſition? If that be admitted as a true maxim, "Like "people, like prieſt;" when the one is unfit, the other will uſually bear too ſtriking a reſemblance.

What do you think, Sir, of the ſchools of the prophets*? According to your ideas, had you lived in the days of Samuel, of Elijah, or of Huldah, you would certainly have given your vote againſt them. In theſe "the ſons of the "prophets" were trained up, either for expounding the law to the people, as ordinary teachers, or for being called to the work of prophecy, as God ſhould ſee meet. But what was this, but "making up men for the miniſtry?" Was there no danger that they might be educated in ſound doctrines, without knowing their power? Yet did the all-wiſe God, on this account, withhold the tokens of his approbation?

If your argument prove any thing, it proves that every kind of religious education is hazardous. We are *not* to "train up a child in the way that he ſhould go," leſt all our work be found to be only "a ſort of a pſeudo-ſpiritual ma-"nufactory."

Candidates for the miniſtry may be "taught to *make* "prayers" in England; as the majority of its inhabitants have long diſcovered a predilection of this kind. Some formal Miniſters in this country, it is ſaid, have adopted a ſimilar plan. But we have not yet heard of any being *taught* to do ſo, either in our Univerſities, or in our Academies.

This evil, it would ſeem, is ſtill more extenſive in its operation. For you add; "From a want of ſpirituality in him-"ſelf, he overlooks the ſame want in others. Hence the com-"plaint, which too generally and, I fear, too juſtly prevails, "of conformity to the world among profeſſors of religion. "They can attend the aſſembly, the card-table, and even "that complete ſynagogue of Satan, the play-houſe itſelf,

* 1 Sam. xix. 18,—20. 2 Kings ii. 3 5. xxii. 14.

"as all being conſiſtent with *their ſort of ſainſhip* *." Every real Chriſtian muſt lament the great conformity of profeſſors to the world; and be ſenſible that the unholy lives of miniſters prove a fatal ſnare to others. But is all this "the natural reſult" of a regular education for the miniſtry? This muſt indeed be a powerful ſpring, that ſets ſo many others in motion.

A ſecond evil, "ariſing from this method of education," claims our attention. "It greatly cramps and fetters even "good and ſpiritual men in their uſefulneſs in the miniſtry. "When every ſermon is in a meaſure to be pre-compoſed, "and then committed to memory, it muſt prove a conſider- "able taſk to the burdened mind. Not only is all the "warmth and animation of extempore ſpeaking annihilated, "but it is rendered too much a matter of labour to be often "repeated †." This evil, however, is not near ſo great as the former. By it, the Miniſter himſelf is a burden; but here only his own mind is burdened. The reſult of the one is, that he lies as "a dead weight on the cauſe." But in conſequence of the other, it is only his ſermon that lies as "a dead weight" on himſelf. The taſk is not ſo great "to "the burdened mind," when it is accuſtomed to it: and at any rate, it becomes us to ſay with David, I will not "of- "fer burnt-offerings unto the Lord my God of that which "doth coſt me nothing ‡." If you ſpeak of every word being "committed to memory," and thus delivered; it muſt indeed be a ſevere bondage. It certainly is every way a preferable method, merely to commit the thoughts to memory, in their connexion. Thus, the ſpeaker is far leſs confined. If new ideas occur, he can eaſily conjoin them with thoſe which are the fruit of previous meditation; and his diction will in general be more natural and impreſſive than if he delivered *verbatim*.

The plan you propoſe is not very different from this, if you give their proper force to the terms you employ. For you ſay, that we are to make "the ſubject of each ſer- "mon in particular the matter of our *deep meditation* and "prayer,

* Page 160. † Page 161. ‡ 2 Sam. xxiv. 24.

"prayer," and ſpeak of the miniſter "*duly conſidering* the "leading truths of his text *." Now, if he do ſo, he will have the chain of thought arranged in his mind, and in ſo far committed to memory: and if he pretend to be "an ex- "tempore preacher," he certainly "*cheats* the auditory †" as really as he who commits "the long and tireſome taſk "to memory." In general, however, it is ſurely the beſt plan for a miniſter, not merely to pre-meditate, but to write. Thus, the thoughts that occur in the courſe of ſtudy will be leſs ready to eſcape him. He can alſo throw them into their moſt natural order. You indeed ſay; "In vain do "we teach the ſtudent to parcel out his text according to "certain cramped rules of logical diſcuſſion ‡." Both "cramped rules," and "logical diſcuſſion," are improper on ſuch a ſubject. But all writers on the art of ſpeaking have conſidered method as neceſſary: and whether it be from the coldneſs of our climate, or from any other cauſe, we, inhabitants of the northern part of the iſland, have generally thought that a regular diſcourſe was moſt uſeful to the hearers.

This plan of ſtudy is attended with another advantage. It tends to preſerve a public ſpeaker from running into that common-place mode of illuſtrating almoſt every ſubject, which will be found unavoidable by thoſe who preach wholly extempore, although men of ſuperior abilities. There is ſo intimate a connexion between the great doctrines of religion, that the ſame thoughts will occur on a variety of ſubjects. Although nothing neceſſary to illuſtration ſhould he ſhunned, how frequently ſoever it has been ſpoken before, yet a proper ſelection of ideas ſhould be made. This cannot eaſily be done in the warmth of extempore ſpeaking. "Every ſcribe, who is inſtructed unto "the kingdom of heaven, is like unto a man that is an "houſeholder, who bringeth forth out of his treaſure things "*new* as well as *old* §." The ſervant of the Lord muſt ſo "meditate on theſe things, and give himſelf wholly to them,

 "that

* Page 160, 161. † Page 159. ‡ Ibid.
§ Matth. xiii. 52.

" that his profiting may appear to all *." I am far from thinking, that public diſcourſes ſhould be dry, abſtracted ſpeculations, addreſſed to man as if he had no power but that of the underſtanding. But, while the affections are not overlooked, the underſtanding muſt be addreſſed. The work of grace, indeed, begins here. The Holy Spirit acts as a " Spirit of wiſdom," and " the eyes of the underſtand-" ing are opened." The ſame faculty is " nouriſhed up," in the progreſſion of this gracious work, by means of a goſpel miniſtry. Even the more deep things of God muſt be exhibited as food for faith. The miniſter of the goſpel muſt not confine himſelf, in his labours, " to firſt principles." He muſt endeavour to " go on unto perfection." Milk for babes will not ſuffice for all who hear him: there muſt be meat for men. Love itſelf muſt " abound yet more and " more in knowledge and in all judgment †." Paul did not reſt ſatisfied with the information he had received concerning that " love in the Spirit," which the Coloſſians manifeſted. " For this cauſe," ſays he, " we alſo, ſince the " day we heard it, do not ceaſe to pray for you, and to de-" ſire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will, " in all wiſdom and ſpiritual underſtanding,—increaſing in " the knowledge of God." This he conſidered as neceſſary to their being " ſtrengthened with all might," and ſo " walking worthy of the Lord unto all pleaſing, being fruit-" ful in every good work ‡."

You allege that, in this way, " all the warmth and ani-" mation of extempore ſpeaking is annihilated." But this is by no means the experience of thoſe who have made a fair trial. Many, who have put both plans to the teſt, have found moſt freedom of utterance when ſpeaking from premeditation. This plan is neceſſary as a proper check to the natural warmth of ſome. Few have ſo much compoſure as to be able to judge with propriety of their own thoughts, while ſpeaking in public. They are apt to be dazzled by a new ſentiment, which they would reject as falſe on cool inveſtigation. They may be in danger of throwing

* 1 Tim. iv. 15. † Phil. i. 9. ‡ Col. i. 8,—11.

ing out ludicrous ideas; ſuch as ill become the place in which they ſtand, or the ſubject of which they treat, and tend to promote mirth, "rather than godly edifying." Such is their animation perhaps, that they leave the ſubject of diſcourſe, before they have well entered on it. Now, it is ſurely better that a miniſter ſhould "*cheat* the auditory "as an extempore preacher," in the way you mention, than cheat them with a ſermon that has no affinity to the text.

It is told, if I recollect right, of the famous Bradbury, that when he was advanced in life, one of his friends tried to perſuade him, that it was now unneceſſary labour for him regularly to prepare his diſcourſes, as he had hitherto done. "Why," ſaid the good old man, "I wiſh always to "have my Iſaac ready. But if the Lord be pleaſed to pro-"vide himſelf a lamb for a burnt offering, then will I cheer-"fully accept of it."

You indeed aſcribe a very peculiar virtue to extemporaneous effuſions. When giving an account of your preaching in a timber-yard at Leith, where you had an opportunity of addreſſing "hundreds of poor ſinners, who probably "would not have followed you into a church," you ſubjoin; "Plain language is the only profitable language for ſinners "like theſe. How ridiculous to try to get into the hearts "of ſuch, by a dry, ſet, formal, methodical diſcourſe! As "well attempt to interrupt the courſe of the tide by the "palm of your hand, as to turn the heart of a ſinner from "his accuſtomed abominations by ſuch puny efforts *." But muſt a *methodical* diſcourſe be always *dry?* Can it never be *plain* and *profitable?* Such ſtrange heads have our Scottiſh Chriſtians, that they generally account ſome conſiderable portion of method neceſſary to render a diſcourſe plain: and they often complain that they cannot profit by a preacher, who gives them merely a deſultory harangue. You ſpeak of our ſea-faring people, Sir, as if they were abſolute ſtrangers to method. Now, no men can be more methodical in their own line; and it is ſcarcely credible that they are ſuch enemies to it in ours, as you ſeem to think. They like

* Page 17.

like to hear every man, as they uſe to ſay, box his compaſs right. They never wiſh to ſee a veſſel carry more ſail than ballaſt.

But, according to you, the poor people of Leith muſt have been in a pitiable plight for ſome hundreds of years paſt. They have generally had methodical preachers, whoſe language muſt therefore have been neither plain nor profitable; whoſe attempts to do them good have been as inadequate as if they had endeavoured "to interrupt the courſe of the *tide*," an alluſion quite in their own ſtile, "with the palm of their "hand." You ſeem to think, that their efforts have been quite *puny*, compared with yours. They have only now and then popped off a random ſhot, as it were at the rigging. You have levelled point-blank at the hull, and poured in a complete broadſide.

You go too far, indeed, Sir. You ſpeak as if preaching in a regular way could never be a mean of the ſalvation of ſuch ſinners as thoſe you refer to; and, on the other hand, as if there were ſome ſecret charm in the oppoſite plan that could make its way to the heart. As if this were too little, you go ſtill farther. You expreſs yourſelf as if methodical preaching tended only to make men worſe than they were before, and all who were zealous for it were enemies to the ſouls of men. For you add this queſtion; "Can any, "therefore, but thoſe who *hate* the ſalvation of ſouls, deny "that they ſhould be ſought for out of the common way, "ſeeing it is notorious that the means *regularly* and gene-"rally employed not only leave them juſt where they found "them, but leave them to get worſe and worſe?" It will give me ſincere pleaſure to learn that you have not left them in a ſimilar ſituation. But "let not him that girdeth "on his harneſs, boaſt himſelf as he that putteth it off."

Nor, after all, can I ſee that you have gone ſo much "out "of the *common* way," as that any uncommon effect ſhould be expected, in ſo far as means are concerned. It was intended, you ſay, "that a large chapel of eaſe ſhould have "been opened for your reception." There was nothing uncommon in this. In conſequence of a diſappointment,

"a com-

"a commodious timber-yard was provided." As little was there any thing uncommon here; unleſs perhaps in the appropriation of this particular yard on this occaſion. There has been many a field-preaching, and perhaps many a yard-preaching, in Leith ere now. It is nothing unuſual for hundreds to attend on ſuch an occaſion, who would not follow the preacher into a church. The ſubject you diſcourſed had nothing uncommon in it. Many a ſermon has been preached from the converſion of Zaccheus. In what reſpect, then, did you go ſo far "out of the common way," as to warrant ſuch high-ſounding words? It muſt have been merely in preaching a diſcourſe, that was not *dry*, nor *ſet*, nor *formal*, nor *methodical*; or in other words, preaching without much preparation. You have left no other mark of diſtinction. But you can have no excluſive claim even to this. For perhaps there is ſcarcely a goſpel miniſter, acquainted with aſſiſting at the diſpenſation of the Lord's Supper, according to the cuſtom obſerved by Preſbyterians, who has not found it neceſſary, from the preſſure of public work, more than once in his life-time, to try the very ſame method of preaching to the ſame kind of hearers. If there was ground of regret that "the means left them juſt where they "found them," the preacher has, on ſuch occaſions, had no reaſon to apprehend that this could juſtly be aſcribed to any ſuper-abundance of *form* or *method* in his diſcourſes.

I ought ere now to have taken notice of a kind of argument *ad hominem*, in favour of Lay-preaching, which you occaſionally throw out in a note. You reaſon againſt the opponents of this ſcheme from their own practice. "The "church of Scotland," you ſay, "licenſe their candidates "for the miniſtry after proper attendance at the Divinity "Hall, to act for ſome time as *Lay-preachers* before they "are ordained to the paſtoral charge, and theſe are called "Probationers. It ſeems then, if this Lay-preaching be "diſcountenanced by ſome, it is approved by the church *." But this practice, far from being a proof that Lay-preaching is approved by the church of Scotland, or by thoſe who adhere

* Page 116.

adhere to her fundamental principles, proves the contrary. It has been often obſerved, that an exception ſtrengthens the general rule; and this is preciſely the caſe here. It demonſtrates the watchfulneſs of this church, in her early period, over the office of the miniſtry; and her tender care that none ſhould preſume to preach, who were not found duly qualified, or enter into office whoſe gifts were not approved by the church at large. It implies a full conviction that none, who are not actually inveſted with miniſterial authority, have a right to preach even occaſionally, without a formal permiſſion from thoſe who are in office. The ſtrictneſs ſhe has enjoined with reſpect to previous trials, is a further proof of this. It is required, that "no expectant "be permitted to preach in public before a congregation, "till firſt he be tried after the ſame manner which is en- "joined by the act of the Aſſembly of Glaſgow 1638, which "preſcribes the order and manner of trial, that is to be "kept with thoſe who are to be admitted to the holy Mi- "niſtry *." They muſt "have exerciſed often, privately "and publicly, with approbation of the Preſbytery." This alſo appears from the limitations to which they are ſubjected, in the exerciſe of their gifts, even after receiving licenſe.

Indeed, Sir, almoſt every word of your argument ſhews with how little propriety you can urge it in defence of Lay-preaching. You ſay, "The Church of Scotland "licenſe." What you ſpeak of is done by a *church*, done by her in her judicative capacity; as exerciſing thoſe powers entruſted by Chriſt to her office-bearers, in trying the gifts of others. They *licenſe*. The very term implies that ſhe acknowledges no right in private Chriſtians to diſpenſe ordinances. They licenſe "their candidates for the miniſ- "try." The perſons who receive this permiſſion, are ſuch as have devoted themſelves to the miniſtry, or who profeſs to have done ſo; and who are not "entangled with the af- "fairs of this life." They licenſe theſe candidates "after "proper attendance at their Divinity-Hall." Theſe do or ought

* Act Aſſembly, Seſſ. 14. 1641.

ought to correſpond to the character of "the ſons of the "prophets" of old, who were trained up for public ſervice in the church. They licenſe them "to act as *Lay-preachers* "before they are ordained—and theſe are called Probation-"ers." But how "to act as Preachers?" As acknowledging that they have a right, as all miniſters have, to "exhort "and rebuke with all authority *?" By no means. For ordination is withheld, which alone formally conſtitutes a right to the exerciſe of the miniſtry. The Church of Scotland does not ſuppoſe that even a proper trial of gifts, and a conſequent licenſe to exerciſe theſe in public, can conſtitute a right to preach with miniſterial authority. They are licenſed as Probationers, as perſons merely under trial for the future exerciſe of an office. And the ſons of the prophets, you know, ſometimes propheſied in the way of trial †. It is declared in the Directory for the Public Worſhip of God, agreed upon by the General Aſſembly at Weſtminſter, and afterwards received by the Church of Scotland, that "ſuch as intend the miniſtry, may occaſionally exerciſe "their gift in preaching in the congregation, if allowed by "the Preſbytery thereunto." And by the Act of Aſſembly 1694, it is declared, that "Probationers are not to be "eſteemed by themſelves, or others, to preach by virtue of "any paſtoral office, but only to make way for their being "called unto a paſtoral charge." They are ſtill conſidered as ſtudents under trial. Therefore, by the Act of Aſſembly 1697, "it is appointed that the Commiſſioners from the ſe-"veral Preſbyteries within this Church bring in an account "to the General Aſſembly yearly, of all the *ſtudents* of di-"vinity, who have *paſſed their trials* in order to the miniſ-"try, from one Aſſembly to another." The proper difference between their preſent and their former ſituation is, that their gifts, which have been already tried by a Preſbytery, and judged to be ſuch as qualify them for the miniſtry, are now ſubjected to a further trial by the church in general. They only "exerciſe publicly," that it may be ſeen whether their talents are edifying to the flock.

* Tit. ii. 15. † 1 Sam. xix. 20. 1 Kings xx. 35, 36.

They are licenſed, you ſay, "to act for ſome time," as preachers. This is indeed all that the Church of Scotland originally meant. As ſhe conferred no office, there is no evidence that ſhe meant that even this licenſe ſhould be permanent. No power is acknowledged, in a Preſbytery, to grant this licenſe without their own juriſdiction. For "when ſuch perſons are at firſt licenſed to be Probationers, "they ſhall oblige themſelves to preach only within the "bounds, or by the direction of that Preſbytery which did "licenſe them." When removing from that Preſbytery which licenſed them, they muſt "carry with them an ex-"tract of their licenſe, and a teſtimonial from the Preſbyte-"ry of their carriage; which they are to preſent to the "Preſbytery to which they come, or at leaſt, to ſome miniſ-"ter therein, before they preach within that bounds: which "miniſter is not to employ them, except in his own pulpit, "before he give notice to the Preſbytery at their next "meeting, and *have their allowance**." This ſhews that it is judged neceſſary there be a virtual renovation of this licenſe, by every Preſbytery within the bounds of which the Probationer comes. It ſeems evidently to have been the original deſign of the Church of Scotland, in adopting this plan, that thoſe whoſe gifts, after a proper trial, were not found generally edifying, or acceptable to any particular congregation, ſhould deſiſt from the public exerciſe of them, or have their licenſe withdrawn.

When theſe things are fairly weighed, it will appear, how little analogy there is between the character of Probationers, and that of others called *Lay-preachers;* who claim a right to preach without any previous education for the Miniſtry, without devoting themſelves to this work, without any permiſſion from an eccleſiaſtical judicatory, any invitation from a congregation, any approbation or even trial of their gifts;—who claim a right to preach, wherever they pleaſe, if there be no phyſical obſtruction; who aſſert the perpetuity of this right; who do not ſubject their gifts to trial by the church, but claim as much authority to explain, exhort or

* Act Aſſembly 1694.

or rebuke, as any can have who are ordained to the Miniſtry; and, in a word, who affirm that all this is the common right of Chriſtians.

To theſe obſervations on the ſubject of Lay-preaching, let me add a quotation from an Author, who was diſtinguiſhed by the ornament of "a meek and quiet ſpirit," and whoſe memory is precious in the church. "Of all the "efforts of Scepticiſm," he ſays, "I cannot perceive that "any have a more fatal tendency than theſe two: The "weakening the authority of the Holy Scriptures, and the "impairing the credit of the Miniſtry as an office of divine "appointment in the church. Let the Scriptures once loſe "their authority, and the Miniſtry its credit, and Religion "will ſoon become one of the moſt wild and looſe, moſt un-"certain and precarious things in the world. It therefore "well becomes us to be peculiarly careful to be well eſta-"bliſhed in theſe two truths; that the Scripture is of "God's inſpiring, and the office of the Miniſtry of his "appointing *."

I am far from ſuppoſing that you, or any of thoſe with whom you co-operate, wiſh to ſerve the cauſe of Scepticiſm, or really mean to injure the church of Chriſt. You act, I am perſuaded, according to your light, although in this inſtance to me it appears to be darkneſs. As little can I entertain the idea, that either you, or they have any deſigns inimical to civil government. I feel no inclination to have recourſe to ſuch weapons, convinced that thoſe, which the holy Scripture ſupplies, are ſufficient; whether I have been able to wield them aright, or not. You wiſh for a *revolution* indeed: but it is *within* the church. The means, however, from which you expect it, ſeem to promiſe nothing of a flattering nature. Speaking of what you are pleaſed to call "the "mighty and unmeaning clamour againſt Lay-preaching," you ſay; "Let God make ſuch Miniſters, and let his "churches humbly and thankfully accept them, and aſſu-"redly they will be proſperous. Theſe will be made the

* Calamy's Sermons on Inſpiration, Serm. 15.

" happy inſtruments of a gracious revival wherever it is " needed; and under ſuch an influence, the churches, with- " out any degree of difficulty, will naturally *drop into* good " and primitive *order*; and when they in return begin to " become cold and formal, ſelf-intereſted and full of them- " ſelves, they will decline as others have done. They will " get into diſputes and cabals, and ſink into the ſpirit of " the world, and thus be rendered worſe than uſeleſs, till " God ſhall again raiſe up another ſet of the ſame ſpirit " which actuated the former *."

Here, Sir, you venture to propheſy. The amount of your prediction, as far as I can underſtand it, is, that every revival, which the church has reaſon to expect, ſhall be from Lay-preaching. She ſhall " naturally drop into good " order," by firſt breaking out of it. She is to be deliver- ed from miniſters and members who are " full of themſelves," by means of thoſe who ſhall be ſo *ſelf-denied* as to wait for the call of her office-bearers, to ſubject their gifts to the trial of ſuch as are truly acquainted with the duties and difficulties of the miniſtry, and refuſe to appear in a public charac- ter without their approbation?—No; her cure muſt proceed from another quarter, from men who ſhall *modeſtly* act as judges of their own qualifications, and finally decide on the call they have to preach " the miniſtry of reconciliation" to others, and to reduce the church to " primitive order."

Though I have ſeen no reaſon for ſuſpecting you and your friends of any intentions hoſtile to the kingdoms of this world, this plan ſeems little calculated for the peace and proſperity of the kingdom of Chriſt. It is, in fact, Sir, a revolutionary government: and it muſt alſo be permanent. You predict a ſucceſſive inſurrection by individuals, of an eccleſiaſtical kind, as the only mean of ſaving the church from the corruptions introduced by thoſe in power.

Your avowed deſign in this work is to level bigotry. I am not ſurpriſed at your ardour, as in your opinion whoe- ver " conquers bigotry kills a monſter†." But it is not im- poſſible, that another monſter may ſtart up in its place; a monſter

* Pages 181 182. † Page 177.

monſter fully as hideous, and not leſs dangerous. Confuſion bodes as ill for the church of Chriſt, as what you call bigotry can do. Nor ſhould I wonder, though a monſter, ſimilar to the firſt, ſhould riſe up out of the aſhes of the old one. Men may be quick enough to diſcern party-ſpirit and bigotry in others, who are blind to the ſame principles in themſelves. It is no new thing, you know, for a man to ſpy a mote in his brother's eye, while he conſiders not that there is a beam in his own.

In the advices you tender to thoſe who wiſh to reform the church by Lay-preaching, in the very paſſage juſt now referred to, you give the character of bigotry by deſcribing its reverſe: "Wherever they conquer bigotry they kill a "monſter, and by this they prove, *inſtead of attempting to* "*ſet up another party*, they wiſh to pull down a party in "all, that Chriſtians may be all as one." When Lay-preaching commenced among us, it was currently declared, that no new party was to be ſet up. To me this ſeemed ſcarcely credible, on the common principles of human nature. For party-ſpirit is not peculiar to any one ſociety. It is natural to man. Now, has this declaration been verified? Have not independent churches been erected, under the wing of this ſociety, in different places? Is no new party ſet up in this place? You call it only building "another "place of worſhip," and urge the neceſſity of this meaſure from the want of "room in all the different places of wor-"ſhip, where the goſpel is preached, to hold above one "quarter of the inhabitants, were they inclined to come *." But the veil is too thin. There is more room in many of the churches, where the goſpel is preached, than what is occupied: and in ſome of them at leaſt, the poor are made welcome, even to *pews*, although unable to pay for them. A new church is in fact organized. You may call it the *Union Church*. But its unity is founded on the introduction of diſunion into other churches; and in alienating from their miniſters thoſe who formerly loved and honoured them "for their work's ſake," and thoſe alſo from each other who

* Pages 163, 164.

who formerly "took ſweet counſel together, and walked "unto the houſe of God in company." And why this alienation? Becauſe, perhaps, their former paſtors and friends cannot concur in a ſcheme for which they can ſee no warrant from the word of God, which they account directly contrary to its authority. Therefore, they muſt be branded as bigots. Is there no bigotry in the imputation?

Give me leave to ſay, Sir, that to many your zeal againſt bigotry ſeems to degenerate into the very principle you decry. You ſpeak of ſome, who, in the language of Dr Witherſpoon, are "*fierce* for *moderation*." It is poſſible for a man to be a bigot in liberality. If he readily "take "up an evil report againſt his neighbour," or againſt a religious ſociety; if he induſtriouſly propagate ſuch a report, it diſcovers too much of this character. The preceding remarks ſhew, whether you have juſtly incurred this cenſure. If he throw out ſevere and illiberal reflections againſt thoſe who diſapprove of his ſcheme; he diſplays the very temper of which he accuſes others. It is very queſtionable, if the good people of Stirling will agree to be ſummoned as exculpatory witneſſes in this caſe. You have accuſed the people there of bigotry, and their miniſters of ſubmitting to this galling yoke in a way not very honourable to their character. "The people are bleſſed here," you ſay, "with "miniſters that fear God and preach the goſpel, both in the "Eſtabliſhed Church, and among the Seceders; but, *poor* "*things*, they are ſadly hampered, and are under the moſt "cruel diſcipline from the bigots to whom each party be-"longs *." Here, Sir, it ſeems that all parties are much of the ſame kidney. You had "heard that there was too "much bigotry and party-ſpirit reigning in this place;" and certainly it was no proof of the contrary, when only about "one thouſand people," out of ſo large a town, attended ſermon.

In the dedication of your obſervations, you combat this monſter with weapons very like its own. You ſeem almoſt to have borrowed your weapons from the council of Trent.

* Page 20.

Trent. " Be the *maul* of *bigotry*," you ſay, " and of " every ſectarian ſpirit among all denominations; declare " vengeance againſt the unſcriptural innovations of *narrow-* " *minded bigots*, who, finding the word of God uncompliant " to deſigns like theirs, have combined together to ſupport " their dogmas, according to certain rules of their own cre- " ating: and all theſe as contrary to the ſacred deſigns of " God, that all Chriſtians ſhould be brethren, and love as " ſuch; as the deſigns of Chriſtianity can be to thoſe of " Mahomet, the Pope, or the Devil. In the name of God, " my beloved Brother, with the Sword of the Spirit in " your hand, and the life of God in your heart, purſue thoſe " *hideous monſters* to the death *." Here, as on ſome other occaſions, you ſeem to claim a right to judge the heart. From your language, it would appear that all whom you call bigots, *finding* that their deſigns have no ſupport from Scripture, have intentionally *combined* to look out for another foundation. Are all diſhoneſt men, in as far as they come not up to your ſtandard of liberality? This is undoubtedly the import of what you have ſaid. For you ſpeak without reſerve; as if *all*, whom you are pleaſed to call bigots, had entered into ſuch a combination, while convinced that their opinions had no countenance from the word of God. One would indeed ſuppoſe, Sir, that you would " rather have the *Devil* himſelf for your door-keeper, than " a *bigot*."

In theſe remarks, I have enlarged far beyond my original intention. I have not, in any reſpect, wilfully miſinterpreted your language. Count me not your enemy, becauſe I tell you the truth. If my heart deceive me not, I love you for Chriſt's ſake, and ſincerely wiſh you ſucceſs as far as you follow him.

I am, *&c.*

* Page 68.

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